



BRIEFING MAY 2014

# Business Benefits of Accessible Workplaces.

## At a Glance

- ◆ People with disabilities remain an overlooked talent pool in the labour market and often struggle to find meaningful employment opportunities.
- ◆ There are clear business benefits, both direct and indirect, to accessible employment practices, including access to an untapped labour pool, large consumer markets, enhanced disability management, improved brand image, and broader community/societal benefits.
- ◆ Strategies and numerous organizations and resources are available to assist organizations in making their employment practices more accessible.

## INTRODUCTION

Why should businesses make their employment practices more inclusive for people with disabilities? Quite simply, they cannot afford not to. Two major demographic pressures are affecting the Canadian labour force today: the aging workforce and the shortage of younger talent available to replace them.<sup>1</sup> Businesses consistently report challenges in recruiting the skilled talent they need in their organizations.

Although many organizations have embraced diversity, people with disabilities continue to be overlooked in the labour force. Their talents are wasted either by not

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1 HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector, *Diversity at Work*.

employing or by under-employing these qualified individuals. Businesses cannot afford to ignore such a large segment of Canada's labour force. At the same time, the aging of the labour force will lead to increased rates of disabilities of many existing mature workers. Basic accommodations can often extend the careers of this valuable talent pool and should be a priority for employers.

If businesses wish to thrive, they need be able to recruit and retain the talent they need, and this includes people with disabilities. To do this, businesses across Canada are encouraged to create diverse and inclusive employment practices that attract new employees with disabilities and, at the same time, allow existing employees with disabilities (or those who may develop disabilities) to remain in the workforce.

The Government of Ontario has taken a strategic regulatory approach by developing an Accessibility Standard for Employment—which requires organizations in the province to make their employment practices more accessible for people with disabilities—under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). Employers are encouraged to let go of many of the preconceived stereotypes and myths about hiring people with disabilities, and to embrace the new AODA standard in order to build a more inclusive workforce.

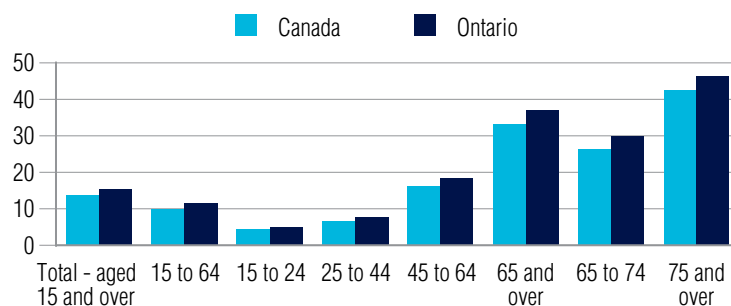
“A strong business case exists for creating accessible work environments for people with disabilities. The full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of the workplace and community life opens the door to their full participation in the economy as customers, entrepreneurs, and employees.”<sup>2</sup>

This briefing focuses mainly on the business benefits of accessibility by outlining various returns that accrue when organizations invest in accessible employment practices for people with disabilities, both new and existing employees. Although geared primarily to businesses in Ontario, the insights in this briefing and the strategies to make employment practices more accessible for people with disabilities can benefit businesses anywhere.

*Making diversity a priority in Canadian organizations is imperative, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is critical to the future success of our business and our economy.*

—Deloitte, *The Road to Inclusion*.

**Chart 1**  
Disability Prevalence by Age Group, Canada and Ontario, 2012  
(per cent)



Source: Statistics Canada, *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012*.

## A PORTRAIT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### People With Disabilities Are a Growing Proportion of the Population

People with disabilities are a large and growing percentage of the population. As the population of Canada continues to age, the number of individuals with disabilities will continue to grow because the prevalence of disabilities increases with age. (See **Chart 1**.) Almost 3.8 million Canadians, or 13.7 per cent of the population, identified themselves as having a disability in 2012. This was up from 12.4 per cent, or 3.6 million people, in 2001.<sup>3</sup> As for Ontario, in 2001, 13.5 per cent

<sup>2</sup> Chénier and Vellone, *Employers' Toolkit*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2001*, and *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012*.

of the province’s population identified themselves as having a disability; by 2011, the rate had risen to 15.4 per cent—that translates into 1.7 million people with disabilities in Ontario.<sup>4</sup>

**People With Disabilities Are Well Educated**

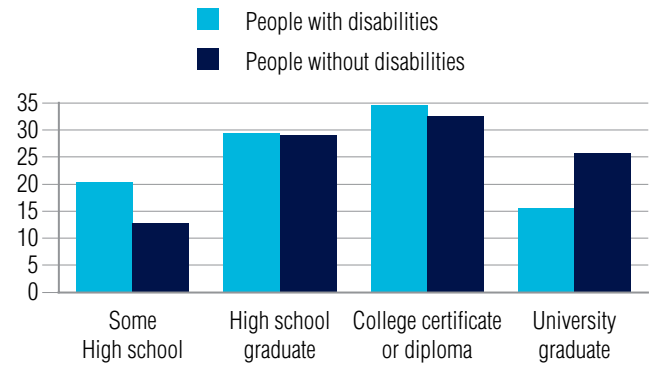
People with disabilities are generally as well-educated as people without disabilities. In fact, 50 per cent of people with disabilities have a post-secondary education (college certificate/diploma or university degree). This is only 8 percentage points lower than the 58 per cent reported by people without disabilities.<sup>5</sup> (See **Chart 2**.)

**People With Disabilities Do Not Fare Well in the Labour Market**

Despite their increasing numbers and education levels, people with disabilities continue to be under-represented in the labour force and face poorer employment prospects than people without disabilities. (See box “**Labour Market Experiences of People With Disabilities**.”)

- ◆ People with disabilities are three times more likely than people without disabilities to be unemployed or out of the labour force.<sup>6</sup>
- ◆ The employment and participation rates for people with disabilities are significantly lower than for

**Chart 2**  
Educational Attainment by Disability Status,  
Population Aged 16–69, Canada, 2011  
(per cent)



Source: Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

people without disabilities; this gap has persisted, unchanged, for over a decade.

- ◆ The employment rate for people with disabilities improves with their level of education, but many who have completed post-secondary education still find it difficult to enter the workforce.<sup>7</sup>

**Labour Market Experiences of People With Disabilities**

**THE CANADIAN CONTEXT**

The labour market circumstances of persons with disabilities lag behind those of persons without disabilities. Approximately one-half of working-age individuals with disabilities are not in the labour force. Many have suggested that this number is closer to 70 per cent once the people who have given up looking for work are factored in. However, it is documented that a significant number could work if they did not face so many barriers to employment.<sup>1</sup>

From 1999 to 2011, the employment and participation rates in Canada for people with disabilities were significantly lower than for people without disabilities. (See charts “**Employment Rates by Disability Status, Population Aged 16–69, Canada**” and “**Labour Force Participation Rates by Disability Status, Population Aged 16–69, Canada**.”) What’s more, the gap has not changed appreciably over time.

Why has this persistent gap remained virtually unchanged for more than a decade, despite employment equity legislation affecting many large employers across Canada?

(continued...)

1 Collin, Lafontaine-Émond, and Pang, *Persons With Disabilities in the Canadian Labour Market*, 3.

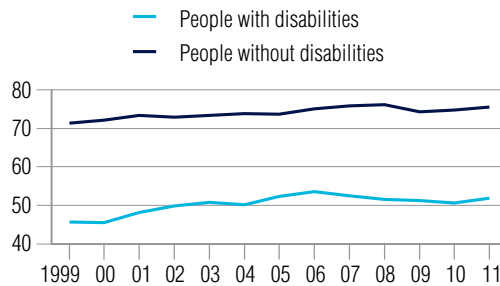
4 Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2001*, and *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012*.

5 Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

6 Collin, Lafontaine-Émond, and Pang, *Persons With Disabilities in the Canadian Labour Market*, 3.

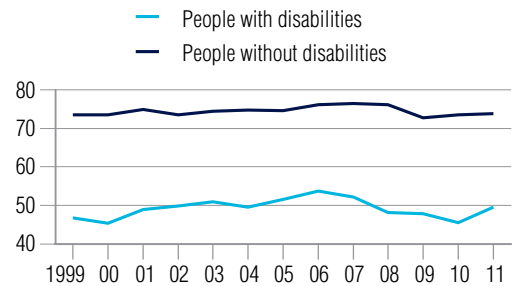
7 Ibid.

Employment Rates by Disability Status, Population Aged 16–69, Canada (per cent)



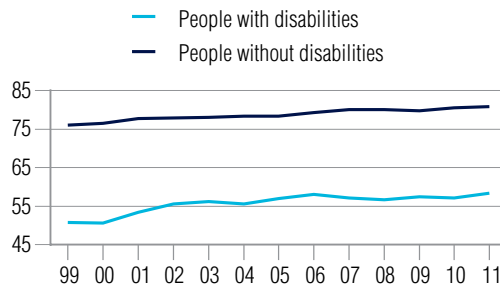
Source: Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

Employment Rates by Disability Status, for Population Aged 16–69, Ontario (per cent)



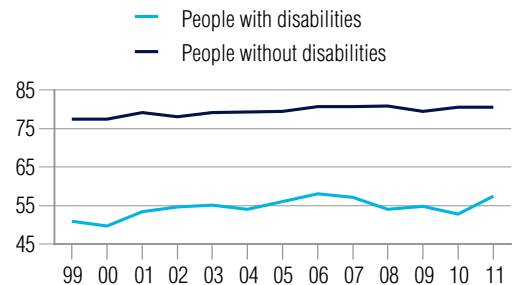
Source: Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

Labour Force Participation Rates by Disability Status, Population Aged 16–69, Canada (per cent)



Source: Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

Labour Force Participation Rates by Disability Status, for Population Aged 16–69, Ontario (per cent)



Source: Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

**THE ONTARIO CONTEXT**

- ◆ In Ontario, the employment rate in 2011 for people with disabilities was 49.5 per cent, which was significantly lower than the rate for people without disabilities (73.9 per cent).<sup>2</sup> (See chart “**Employment Rates by Disability Status, for Population Aged 16–69, Ontario.**”)
- ◆ Forty-one per cent of Ontarians between 16 and 64 years of age with disabilities were either unemployed or not in the labour force in 2010; this rate is almost three times the rate for Ontarians without disabilities (14 per cent).<sup>3</sup>

- ◆ In 2011, the labour force participation rate for people with disabilities in Ontario was much lower than the rate for people without disabilities (57.5 per cent versus 80.5 per cent).<sup>4</sup> (See chart “**Labour Force Participation Rates by Disability Status, for Population Aged 16–69, Ontario.**”)

Sources: Collin, Lafontaine-Émond, and Pang, *Persons With Disabilities in the Canadian Labour Market*, 3; Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, *Canada–Ontario Labour Market Agreement, 2012–13 Annual Plan*; Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

2 Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

3 Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, *Canada–Ontario Labour Market Agreement, 2012–13 Annual Plan*.

4 Statistics Canada, *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics*, 2011.

## DISABILITY AFFECTS US ALL

Some individuals are born with disabilities; others will develop them over time. Anyone could become a person with a disability due to accident, illness, or age—this is something we should all keep in mind. Not all disabilities are visible; in fact, most are not visible at all. The odds are good that we already know someone or are working with someone who has a disability, but we just don't know it formally.

*Disability is an issue of concern for all Canadians. At some point in our lives, we all will use services built and designed to make Canada more accessible and inclusive.*

—Council of Canadians with Disabilities,  
“People With Disabilities.”

## MAKING EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES IN ONTARIO ACCESSIBLE

Ontario is approaching the issue of workplace accessibility for people with disabilities from an employment standards perspective, a unique approach that other jurisdictions will be watching.

In 2005, the Ontario government passed the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), with the goal of making “Ontario accessible to people with disabilities by 2025.”<sup>8</sup> Accessibility standards under the AODA are requirements/laws/regulations that businesses and organizations must follow to identify, remove, and prevent barriers so people with disabilities have more opportunities to participate in everyday life. Approximately 360,000 Ontario businesses and organizations are affected by Ontario's accessibility laws.<sup>9</sup>

The Customer Service Standard under the AODA was the first standard to become law. The next four standards—Information and Communications, Employment, Transportation, and Design of Public Spaces (DOPS)—have been combined under one regulation, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). This regulation is now law and the requirements currently in regulation are being phased in between 2011 and 2021.

The Accessibility Standard for Employment will require Ontario businesses and organizations to make accessibility a regular part of hiring, and supporting employees with disabilities throughout the course of their careers. It will affect not only potential new employees with disabilities but will also affect current employees with disabilities, those who may develop disabilities, or those returning to work after an injury or illness resulting in a disability. For more information on the AODA, IASR, and compliance deadlines, see [Appendix A: Ontario's Legislation](#).

## THE BUSINESS BENEFITS OF ACCESSIBLE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Many organizations understand that being responsive to changing demographics and societal values is a business imperative and a competitive advantage. Some already have gone so far as to incorporate accessibility into their business strategy and practices. This section provides an overview of some of the key business benefits of engaging in accessible employment practices for people with disabilities.

### TAPPING INTO A SKILLED TALENT POOL

In a labour market seeing increased competition for qualified workers, people with disabilities are a potential talent pool that Ontario businesses need to engage. Despite the recent recession—which delayed the retirement plans of many baby boomers—the impending retirement plans of this demographic group will eventually materialize. This, combined with fewer workforce entrants and a recovering economy, will lead to labour and skills shortages.<sup>10</sup>

8 Ontario, *Making Ontario Accessible*.

9 Ibid.

10 Antunes and Macdonald, “Recession only Delayed the Inevitable Workforce Shortages,” 42–46.

Immigration alone will not fill the gap and increasingly employers will need to look for new sources of talent and be more inclusive in their hiring practices; one source of talent not fully tapped is people with disabilities.<sup>11</sup> In order to capitalize on this group, business will need to consider accessibility.<sup>12</sup> This includes changes to workplace design, re-engineered processes, and non-standard work arrangements. Willingness to make minor accommodations and to support the needs of people with disabilities will be instrumental in making employment possible for some and in helping to further develop the careers of existing employees. (See box “**People With Disabilities: An Underutilized Talent Pool.**”)

### People With Disabilities: An Underutilized Talent Pool

According to research by The Conference Board of Canada, job vacancies in Ontario could reach 190,000 in 2020, and rise to 364,000 by 2025 and 564,000 by 2030.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Ontario is losing out on as much as \$24.3 billion in economic activity and \$3.7 billion in provincial tax revenues annually because employers cannot find people with the skills they need to innovate and grow in today's economy.<sup>2</sup>

There is a wealth of skilled and talented people who are not effectively engaged in the Canadian workforce: people with disabilities. Representing 15.4 per cent of population in Ontario,<sup>3</sup> people with disabilities are ready, willing, and able to fill the gap.

“There is a war for talent. If you restrict your search for talent in any way, you will be giving your competitors the edge they need to put you out of business.”<sup>4</sup>

Sources: Munro and Stuckey, *The Need to Make Skills Work*, 2; Statistics Canada, *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012*; Canadian Business SenseAbility, “Acting on Findings.”

- 1 Watt and others, *Ontario's Looming Labour Shortage Challenges*, 10.
- 2 Munro and Stuckey, *The Need to Make Skills Work*, 2.
- 3 Statistics Canada, *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012*.
- 4 Canadian Business SenseAbility, “Acting on Findings.”

11 Deloitte, *The Road to Inclusion*, 3.

12 The Conference Board of Canada, “Rethinking the Workforce: Aging Populations in Canada,” 131–149.

### Business Spotlight: Paddy Flaherty's Irish Pub

Paddy Flaherty's Irish Pub in Sarnia, Ontario—like other small employers in the food services industry—experiences a high turnover among its employees. People with disabilities have become an important source of dedicated, long-term talent for the restaurant. The pub worked with Sarnia Community Living to find suitable candidates with disabilities. That organization not only provides employers with potential employees but also offers job coaching to the new employees on how to do their job.

Source: Chénier and Vellone, *Employers' Toolkit*.

### ACCESSIBLE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES DRIVE BOTTOM-LINE RESULTS

Accessible employment practices that are inclusive for people with disabilities are good for business and the bottom line. Research has shown that companies that invest in accessible employment practices reported a number of business benefits, including the following:<sup>13,14,15,16</sup>

- ◆ Better job retention
- ◆ Higher attendance
- ◆ Lower turnover
- ◆ Enhanced job performance and work quality
- ◆ Better safety records

Statistics Canada research found that, in organizations with accessible employment practices, staff retention was 72 per cent higher among people with disabilities, 90 per cent of people with disabilities did as well or better in their jobs than co-workers without disabilities, and 86 per cent of employees with disabilities rated average or better in attendance.<sup>17</sup>

According to a BMO survey, 77 per cent of small business owners who have hired people with a disability said these employees either met or exceeded their

13 Linkow and others, *Leveling the Playing Field*.

14 Harris Interactive, *Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities*.

15 Hernandez and McDonald, “Exploring the Costs and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities,” 15–23.

16 Unger, “How Do Front-Line Supervisors in Business Perceive the Performance of Workers with Disabilities?”

17 Deloitte, *The Road to Inclusion*.

expectations.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, employers who have experience working with people with disabilities are more likely to hire other people with disabilities.<sup>19</sup>

Research by the U.S. Job Accommodation Network (JAN) found that employers who made reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities reported multiple direct and indirect benefits.<sup>20</sup> (See [Table 1](#).)

**Table 1**  
Percentage of Respondents Citing the Following as Benefits of Making Reasonable Accommodations For Employees with Disabilities (per cent)

Direct Benefits		Indirect Benefits	
Company retained qualified employees	90	Improved interactions with co-workers	64
Increased the employee's productivity	71	Increased overall morale	60
Eliminated the costs of training a new employee	61	Increased overall company productivity	56

Source: Beth Loy, *Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact*.

### Business Spotlight: DuPont

The multinational chemical company DuPont, a leader in employing people with disabilities, has surveyed and documented its experience over the last 30 years. Its findings have been consistent: “Employees with disabilities are equivalent to DuPont’s other employees in job performance, attendance and safety.”

Source: BC Centre for Employment Excellence, *Recruiting and Retaining Persons With Disabilities*.

### Return on Disability Index

Fifth Quadrant Analytics in New York City has developed a “Return on Disability” (RoD) index for the U.S. and Canadian markets, an index that tracks the share of publicly traded firms that deal best with people with disabilities. Its research suggests that companies that perform well across diversity indicators outperform their industry peers in revenue growth and shareholder value. Their key findings include the following:

- ◆ Companies performing well in the area of disability are highly responsive to their customers and thus outperform peers in revenue growth.
- ◆ Disability is an inspiration for lean processes, breakthrough innovations and a new source of diverse talent—and these are driving productivity.
- ◆ Companies scoring well on the RoD index consistently grow shareholder value as measured by long-term stock price appreciation.

Source: Fifth Quadrant Analytics, *Return on Disability Ratings Report, Canada 2012*.

### DIVERSE WORKPLACES ARE MORE INNOVATIVE WORKPLACES

A more inclusive and diverse workforce that includes employees with disabilities is often a more innovative workforce. Research suggests that more diverse work teams create a wider range of solutions to business issues and are often more innovative and creative.<sup>21,22,23</sup>

### Diversity Can Drive Innovation and Growth

“Diversity is a source of innovation and sustainable economic prosperity. RBC believes that diversity and inclusion provide an advantage in intellectual capital and help ensure our company’s continued growth in Canada and around the world. By drawing on the strength of diversity, we can meet new challenges and help create prosperity for our clients, employees, shareholders and communities. We believe making the most of diversity is the smart thing to do, and the right thing to do.”

Source: RBC Financial Group, *RBC Diversity Blueprint 2012–2015*, 3.

18 Bank of Montreal, *BMO Survey: More Than Half of Small Businesses Have Never Hired a Person With a Disability*.

19 Unger, “Employers’ Attitudes Toward Persons With Disabilities in the Workforce: Myths or Realities?” 5–6.

20 Beth Loy, *Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact*.

21 Deloitte, *The Road to Inclusion*, 1.

22 European Commission, *The Costs and Benefits of Diversity*.

23 Equality and Human Rights Commission, *An Employer’s Guide*, 4.

People with disabilities often bring a set of unique and important skills to the business where they work. They develop skills such as perseverance, determination, and goal-setting, which are very important business assets.<sup>24,25</sup>

*A person in a wheelchair has to be innovative just to get through the day. Imagine how that mindset helps a pod or team at a workplace.*

—Griffiths, “Six Reasons.”

Organizations that explicitly value diversity will create a more positive working environment for all employees, which is critical for fostering innovation.<sup>26</sup> An Ernst & Young survey in 2011 found that the majority of respondents believe diversity of teams and experiences improves both the financial performance and reputation of their organizations.<sup>27</sup>

#### **Business Spotlight: London Convention Centre**

Betty Holme, Director of Corporate Services at the London Convention Centre (London, Ontario), “believes having a diverse workforce, which includes those with disabilities, gives the convention centre a competitive edge. ‘When you work with a diverse group, it’s easier to deal with diverse client needs because you’re already used to dealing with people in different ways on a regular basis. Our employees take the same philosophy of dealing with their teammates to dealing with their clients. It’s a smoother transition for our clients. Because our staff are so used to accommodating individual needs, providing similar customization for our client’s needs becomes second nature. And the happier our clients are, the more they do business with us.’ ”

Source: Ability First Coalition, *Opening the Door to Your Business*.

#### **ACCESS TO NEW AND WEALTHY CONSUMER MARKETS**

Collectively, people with disabilities represent a major consumer market in Canada that has not been fully capitalized on by business. Consumers with disabilities have money to spend on products and services that meet their needs. Royal Bank research estimates that people with disabilities spend about \$25 billion annually on goods and services.<sup>28</sup> Factor in the wealth of a growing seniors’ population—many of whom have disabilities—and of their friends and families, this combined market presents terrific business opportunities in a market that is relatively underserved.

Businesses cannot market effectively to consumers with disabilities if they do not recognize and understand those consumers’ needs. By creating inclusive workplaces, which includes hiring employees with disabilities, businesses are able to better gain knowledge and understanding.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Business Spotlight: TD Canada Trust**

At TD Canada Trust Bank, many employee accommodations are funded and developed centrally in the TD Assistive Technology Laboratories. These, in turn, generate spinoff business opportunities when products, processes, and services are adapted and rolled out for clients, making services more accessible to all customers.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada, *Open for Business: The Value of Accessibility*, 11.

#### **INCLUSIVENESS MATTERS TO CONSUMERS**

Demonstrating a commitment to accessibility through business practices—such as hiring people with disabilities—sends a message to customers, employees, and the wider community that a business is open to all. This can help improve a brand image and increase customer loyalty.

In a 2006 national survey of U.S. consumer attitudes toward companies that hire people with disabilities, 87 per cent of respondents said they agreed or strongly agreed that they would prefer to give their business to

24 Wong, “Being Different: Understanding People with Disabilities.”

25 Purdie, *Employment of People With Disabilities*.

26 The Conference Board of Canada. *Immigrants and Innovation*.

27 Turley, *E&Y CEO on What Makes Global Leaders Successful*.

28 McCallum and Holt, “Outlook for People with Disabilities,” 1–6.

29 Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, *Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector*.



**Table 2**  
Consumer Perceptions of Businesses That Hire People With Disabilities  
(per cent)

<b>Participants' favourability ratings of companies that demonstrate social responsibility</b>	<b>Much more favourable</b>	<b>More favourable</b>	<b>Same</b>	<b>Less favourable</b>	<b>Much less favourable</b>
Hire people with disabilities	32	60	5	1	1

<b>Participants' perceptions of the benefits of employing people with disabilities</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
Help other employees have better understanding of persons w/disabilities	40	50	3	5	1
Show their customers that they care about all workers	40	53	3	4	1
Are companies you would prefer to give your business to	33	54	6	4	1

Source: Siperstein and others, "A National Survey of Consumer Attitudes."

companies that employ people with disabilities. Eighty-three per cent agreed or strongly agreed that employing people with disabilities showed customers that businesses care about all workers. Furthermore, 92 per cent of respondents were more favourable or much more favourable toward companies that hire people with disabilities. (See [Table 2](#).)

Businesses rely on their brand and their reputation to develop their customer base. A positive customer experience can translate into higher sales and repeat business.<sup>30</sup> A poor reputation will repel consumers who can, moreover, be susceptible to "cause related" marketing<sup>31</sup> and who will often utilize boycotts to send a message.<sup>32</sup>

### **BETTER DISABILITY MANAGEMENT**

Absenteeism due to illness or disability is very costly to organizations and is an important human resources challenge facing employers today. The aging workforce

in Ontario has serious implications for disability management. (See box "[The Aging Workforce and Disability Management](#).")

#### **The Aging Workforce and Disability Management**

In the coming decades, the size of Ontario's mature population is going to increase significantly as the population ages. The median age of Ontario's population is projected to rise from 40 years in 2012 to 43 years in 2036.<sup>1</sup> There have been numerous studies documenting the positive correlation between increased age and increased rates of disability. The mature worker is more susceptible to acquiring disabilities through injury and chronic disease/conditions.

But employers will want to retain this vital talent pool of experienced mature workers. They do not want the knowledge and experience to walk out the door prematurely when basic accommodations can help extend the careers of many.

Disability management is a proactive workplace process that allows employers to better support employees with physical and mental health issues while they are at work. It also promotes their early and safe return to work, if they

30 Rucci, Kirn, and Quinn, "The Employee-Customer Profit Chain at Sears."

31 Digh, "America's Largest Untapped Market."

32 Baklid and others, *Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities*.

1 Ontario Ministry of Finance, *Ontario Population Projections Update, 2012–2036*, 8.

(continued...)

require a leave of absence, with a primary focus on minimizing the impact of injuries or illnesses on employees, employers, and society as a whole. Different models and approaches exist for different employer needs, environments, and cultures.<sup>2</sup>

Sources: Chénier, *Creating an Effective Workplace Disability Management Program*, 4; Ontario Ministry of Finance, *Ontario Population Projections Update, 2012–2036*, 8.

2 Chénier, *Creating an Effective Workplace Disability Management Program*, 4.

Each year, benefit payments and lost productivity due to absenteeism (including illness and disability) cost employers billions of dollars. According to research by The Conference Board of Canada, in 2011/2012, the average direct cost of workplace absenteeism in Canada was \$16.6 billion.<sup>33</sup> Employees who have to take a disability leave during their career face significant challenges returning to work—especially if their disability prevents them from returning to their previous position. Processes that facilitate the early and sustainable return to work of employees who experience a temporary or permanent disability are a win-win for everyone. This will reduce the need for short- or long-term disability leaves, which can be a burden on employer disability programs.

#### **Business Spotlight: KPMG Canada**

KPMG Canada is a professional services firm that provides audit, tax, and advisory services. Concern for the welfare of their employees returning to work from a disability-related leave led the company to develop a gradual return-to-work program (RTW) for employees on short- and long-term disability leaves. The organization has seen great success with their RTW program, with the overwhelming majority of employees successfully returning to work from prolonged disability leave. Not only has the program helped those on leave to return to work successfully, it also has had a significant impact on employee morale, as employees feel they are fully supported by the organization should they require medical leave due to disability.

Source: Chénier and Vellone, *Employers' Toolkit*.

#### **SOCIETAL BENEFITS**

Everyone benefits when people with disabilities are able to participate fully in the labour market. According to Joe Dale, Executive Director of the Ontario Disability Employment Network, Ontario taxpayers will spend \$4 billion in 2013 on income supports for people with disabilities, and this is growing at 8 per cent per year, outstripping inflation and GDP per capita combined.<sup>34</sup> When people with disabilities have meaningful employment, the tax burden is lessened. Enabling increased workforce participation by people with disabilities will not only increase their individual and family income, but it could also increase the GDP per capita in Ontario by up to \$600 per annum.<sup>35</sup>

*This persistent unemployment gap  
[of people with disabilities] needs  
to be addressed for many reasons.*

*It can take a social and economic toll  
on these workers and their families.*

*It costs government and tax payers  
money unnecessarily, and it robs*

*Canadian businesses and our economy  
of the vital contribution persons with a  
disability are ready and able to make.*

—Sonya Kunkel, Director of Diversity and Inclusion  
at BMO, in *BMO Survey* (2012).

33 Stewart, *Missing in Action*, 9.

34 Dale, “An Emerging Market: People Who Have a Disability.”

35 Kemper and others, *Releasing Constraints*.

## COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Beyond the business benefits of making workplace employment practices more accessible for people with disabilities, Ontario employers must also comply with a legal requirement.

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), nearly three-quarters of the complaints it receives are from the workplace and, of these, discrimination around employment based on disability is one of the single biggest sources of complaints. Such cases are costly, time-consuming, and bad for the corporate image.<sup>36</sup>

Non-compliant organizations may face enforcement action including Director's Orders or administrative monetary penalties. An organization has the right to request a review of a Director's Order within 30 days or it can appeal directly to the Licence Appeal Tribunal (LAT) within 15 days. If an organization fails to respond to a Director's Order in any way within 30 days, it may be faced with fines and prosecution involving court intervention. A provincial court can levy fines of up to \$50,000 per day for an individual and \$100,000 per day for a corporation.<sup>37</sup>

## BARRIERS TO MAKING EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Despite the potential business benefits of making employment practices accessible for people with disabilities, a disproportionate number of these highly capable, educated, and driven Canadians remain unemployed.

So what is stopping businesses from making their employment practices more accessible to people with disabilities?

36 Wright, *Tapping the Talents of People With Disabilities*.

37 Information provided by Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

### Costs of Workplace Accommodation: Myth vs. Facts

**Myth:** The costs associated with making workplaces more accessible for people with disabilities can be significant.

**Fact:** Accommodation can be easy and inexpensive: research finds that most workers with disabilities require no special accommodation and, if it is required, it often costs \$500 or less.<sup>1,2</sup>

Statistics Canada reports that the most common workplace accommodations required for employed people with activity limitations were the following:<sup>3</sup>

- ◆ Modified hours or days, or reduced work hours—about 1 in 5 (20.1 per cent);
- ◆ Special chair or back support (16.5 per cent) or job redesign (14.2 per cent)—approximately 1 in 6;
- ◆ Modified or ergonomic workstation (10.7 per cent)—about 1 in 10.

Sources: Braun, "Disabled Workers; Employer Fears Are Groundless"; Beth Loy, *Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact*; Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Labour Force Experience of People With Disabilities in Canada*, 18.

1 Braun, "Disabled Workers; Employer Fears Are Groundless."

2 Beth Loy, *Workplace Accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact*.

3 Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Labour Force Experience of People With Disabilities in Canada*, 18

## ACCOMMODATION IS PERCEIVED AS COMPLEX AND EXPENSIVE

Research by the U.S. Job Accommodation Network shows that most workers with disabilities require no special accommodation. A study by Queen's University found that the most frequently reported accommodations for employees with disabilities include no-cost options such as flexible arrangements and policies, and other low-cost initiatives such as ergonomic/adaptive office equipment—solutions that can be applied to all employees as part of a workplace wellness strategy.<sup>38</sup>

38 Lysaght and others, "Accommodations in the Workplace for Employees With Disabilities."

**Business Spotlight: Walgreens**

When the U.S. pharmacy chain Walgreens designed its distribution centre in Anderson, South Carolina, it used cutting-edge technology and universal design principles (the design of products and environments that are usable by all without the need for accommodation).<sup>1</sup> Walgreens discovered that the “steps [it] took to make work easier and more productive for people with disabilities made work easier and more productive for all employees.”<sup>2</sup>

As a result, the centre has been 20 per cent more efficient than other plants, and people with disabilities now comprise almost 40 per cent of the Anderson workforce. There has been no additional cost for these accomplishments, as all employees have been held to the same standards.

Source: Linkow and others, *Leveling the Playing Field*.

1 Connell and others, “The Principles of Universal Design.”

2 J. Randolph Lewis of the Walgreen Company.

It is key to note that physical or structural modifications can actually be helpful for the entire workforce and for customers, not only for employees with disabilities.<sup>39</sup> (See box “[Business Spotlight: Walgreens.](#)”)

**EMPLOYERS SAY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DON'T APPLY**

In a survey by BMO, more than half of the employers surveyed reported never having hired someone with a disability despite recognizing the business benefits. The main reason cited was that they do not know how to recruit them.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, a study by The Conference Board of Canada found that even organizations that recognize the business advantage of a diverse workforce reported difficulty in accessing the talent of people with disabilities.<sup>41</sup> The principal challenge noted by three-quarters of employers in that study was finding qualified job applicants who were people with disabilities.

Employers must remove barriers preventing a person with disabilities from applying and must better identify themselves as organizations with policies and practices

39 Chénier and Vellone, *Employers' Toolkit*.

40 Bank of Montreal, *BMO Survey: More Than Half of Small Businesses*.

41 Wright, *Tapping the Talents of People With Disabilities*.

to accommodate people with disabilities. As noted above, the Ontario accessibility standard for employment requires that employers inform job applicants that accommodations are available on request to support both the application and selection processes, and that resources and information can be provided in accessible formats.

There are organizations in almost every community in Ontario dedicated to helping businesses find skilled and educated people with disabilities who are ready to work and who are looking for jobs. (See “[Reach Out to Local Community Partners and Agencies](#)” on page 16)

**Business Spotlight: Grandmother's Pie Shoppe**

Grandmother's Pie Shoppe, a food manufacturing business in Sudbury, Ontario, partnered with the local chapter of the Ontario March of Dimes (now March of Dimes Canada) to find employees. Agency staff ascertained the job fit for some of their disabled clients and supported training to ensure employees were comfortable in their roles. The result for Grandmother's Pie Shoppe was a competent and reliable workforce.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada, *Open for Business: The Value of Accessibility*, 10

**NEGATIVE ATTITUDES PERSIST**

Some employers have negative attitudes and misconceptions about people with disabilities. Research found that “attitudes at all corporate levels” were the leading impediment to employment of people with disabilities. Front-line staff and hiring managers most often had reservations about hiring people with disabilities due to preconceived myths.<sup>42</sup> Business leaders suggested that training, more interaction with people with disabilities, and employer best practices were the best ways to cut through the attitudes and the myths.<sup>43</sup> (See box “[Busting the Myths on Hiring People With Disabilities.](#)”)

42 Wittmer and Wilson, “Turning Diversity into \$: A Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities,” 58–61.

43 Ibid.

### Busting the Myths on Hiring People With Disabilities

Most people make assumptions about people with disabilities but often these don't stand up to any scrutiny. Below are a few myths to be found in the Government of New Brunswick's publication *Myths About Hiring Persons With Disabilities*:

- ◆ **Myth:** Employees with disabilities can fill only entry-level positions.
- ◆ **Fact:** Almost 75 per cent of working-age adults with disabilities had a high school diploma or higher education.
- ◆ **Myth:** Employees with disabilities are more difficult to supervise.
- ◆ **Fact:** Employees with disabilities are no more difficult to supervise than employees without disabilities.
- ◆ **Myth:** Employees with disabilities cannot be fired or disciplined.
- ◆ **Fact:** Employees with disabilities are subject to the same performance standards and guidelines as other employees.

Source: New Brunswick, *Myths About Hiring Persons With Disabilities*.

### Business Spotlight: BMO Financial Group

BMO Financial Group made a concerted effort to dispel the myths surrounding people with disabilities. It launched the "Count Me In" campaign and encouraged all employees, including executives, with non-visible disabilities to step forward and serve as examples that people with disabilities can indeed make meaningful contributions to the success of the organization.

Simon Fish, Executive Vice President and General Council, BMO Financial Group and the bank's Executive Diversity Champion, says that "we're changing perceptions which, in turn, are changing behaviour. Seeing successful employees and executives who are unabashed about discussing their disability not only reinforces that BMO is a welcoming, inclusive organization, but also has had a positive impact on the lift we are seeing in our own hiring practices."

Source: Bank of Montreal, *Canadian Businesses Slow to Hire People With Disabilities*.

## WORKPLACES NEED TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

It is not enough for companies simply to hire diverse employees; inclusive workplace practices are required to retain them. Employers who create accessible and

inclusive work environments will better attract and *keep* a wider pool of talent—including people with disabilities. Candidates are less likely to apply for employment opportunities with businesses that do not visibly show their commitment to inclusion.<sup>44</sup>

*There's a war for talent. We want to attract the best and brightest people to TD and the way to do that is to have a diverse workforce, with many different skill sets and experiences. Our people are our competitive advantage.*

—Sharlene Decloux, TD Canada Trust District Vice President for London East Area, in Ability First Coalition, *Our People*.

Research by Aon Hewitt on employee engagement shows that Canadian employers are achieving success in creating inclusive work environments for some groups, but not for all. People with disabilities had significantly lower engagement scores (57 per cent) than the national average (65 per cent), than women (66 per cent), than visible minorities (67 per cent), and than Aboriginal workers (60 per cent).<sup>45</sup> Evidence would suggest the employment "deal" that organizations are offering to people with disabilities is "not as compelling" as they are less engaged in their work than other groups of employees in the Canadian workforce. So what does this mean for organizations that are attempting to attract and retain persons with disabilities? They must develop programs and policies that embed diversity in the employment deal, by providing choice in terms of benefits, work hours, work locations, and so on.<sup>46</sup>

44 Equality and Human Rights Commission, *An Employer's Guide*, 4.

45 Aon Hewitt, "What Do We See."

46 Tapia, *The Emerging Diverse Workforce*, 7.

## **INACCESSIBLE WEBSITES AND APPLICATION PROCESSES**

Inaccessible websites with tools and applications that are not user-friendly for people with disabilities can make it difficult for candidates to search and apply for jobs.<sup>47</sup> There are anecdotal examples of candidates who simply stopped midway through an online application process due to the number of questions and the fact that no consideration had been given to how someone with a disability would use the online forms.<sup>48</sup>

A major issue for many applicants is also the fact that there is often no other way to apply for jobs except through an online process. Some community groups have noted that a significant portion of their clients with disabilities do not have computers or access to the Internet and sometimes do not know how to use a computer. Many employers are not flexible on the application process, relying entirely on online submissions. So some individuals with disabilities get screened out before even being able to apply and employers are not reaching this untapped resource.

## **STRATEGIES TO MAKE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES MORE ACCESSIBLE**

There is no “one size fits all” strategy for employers to make their employment practices more accessible. Below are some tips and resources available to help employers as they work to make their employment practices and policies accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.

### **ENSURE LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT**

As is often the case, it takes commitment and direction from the top to make change happen. Leaders play a key role in ensuring that a business truly does change its employment practices to be more inclusive of people

with disabilities. Leadership sets the course and determines the level of support and resources available. Furthermore, leaders act as role models for appropriate behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs about accessibility. They may make the critical difference between implementing changes that are merely adequate as opposed to those that go beyond the status quo—behaviours lead, and attitudinal shifts follow.

### **CREATE AN INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL EMPLOYEES**

Creating an inclusive work environment is a key element of accessibility. This means paying attention to culture and the employee experience. Research shows that inclusive organizations have more engaged and thus more productive employees.<sup>49,50,51</sup> Organizations need to invest in staff training on accessibility and work to ensure all employees feel valued and engaged. It is important to provide recruiters and hiring managers with disability awareness and sensitivity training. Human resources programs and policies need to be flexible enough to accommodate broad differences in their employees.<sup>52</sup>

A case study by The Conference Board, Inc., of the U.S. pharmacy chain Walgreens found that a key lesson learned by the company when making one of their distribution centres accessible for people with disabilities was to simply do it; you have to just jump in and hire people with disabilities and not over-plan and over-think the issue.<sup>53</sup> Although managers and supervisors at the organization had received disability awareness training, a manager stated that “They all said that [there was] no training [that] was better than having people with disabilities in their departments.”<sup>54</sup> Other organizations are encouraged to follow this advice and make the decision to hire people with disabilities.

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47 McLean and Ohoro, *Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Workplaces for People With Disabilities*.

48 Anecdotal examples given by participants at EARN's Business Leadership Network (BLN) and Inclusion Forum in Ottawa (January 14, 2014).

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49 Deloitte, *The Road to Inclusion*, 1.

50 European Commission, *The Costs and Benefits of Diversity*.

51 Equality and Human Rights Commission, *An Employer's Guide*, 4.

52 Tapia, *The Emerging Diverse Workforce*.

53 Linkow and others, *Leveling the Playing Field*.

54 Hastings, “Walgreens' Quest for Inclusion.”

*Inclusion not only requires strong developmental and advancement programs and processes but also an environment that communicates that differences are welcome, and all are encouraged to bring their whole selves to work so they can achieve their best.*

—Tapia, *The Emerging Diverse Workforce*.

#### **Business Spotlight: IBM**

IBM, a global information technology company, has a long history of creating inclusive work environments for people with disabilities. Senior managers at IBM emphasize that providing accommodations for employees with disabilities is key to creating a positive work climate so that employees who are accommodated feel included and valued. The managers' key advice on first steps in accommodating an employee with a disability is to consult with that employee. Who better to know the challenges and the measures to remove the barriers than the employee himself/herself?

Source: Chénier and Vellone, *Employers' Toolkit*.

#### **Business Spotlight: Dolphin Digital Technologies**

Dolphin Digital Technologies (Kitchener, Ontario) designs and supports computer networks. It has integrated accessibility into every aspect of its business model in order to retain and develop qualified employees. This was a deliberate strategy by the company founders to recognize a need in the local community to employ more people with disabilities. As a result, the organization had a 100 per cent retention rate of their employees with disabilities from 2006 to 2012.

Source: Chénier and Vellone, *Employers' Toolkit*.

### **BUILD ACCESSIBILITY INTO BUSINESS PLANNING**

Planning with an accessibility lens is essential to avoid unnecessary costs and to maximize opportunities. Businesses that build or retrofit with accessibility in

mind are able to achieve considerable savings in the long term. They are also in a better position to meet evolving standards and customer needs.<sup>55</sup>

### **DEDICATE RESOURCES**

While the size of their investment in accessibility varies, successful businesses commit resources—both human and financial—to make their workplaces more accessible. As with any other significant business endeavour, there needs to be a realistic assessment of what is required in terms of dedicated resources. When resources are invested, accessibility moves from being an undeveloped business opportunity to being a successful business offering. It requires no more and no less than any other good business investment.<sup>56</sup>

*While an initial cost [for an accessibility feature] may seem awful, over the long run, it's really inconsequential.*

—Neil Young, Pharmacist-Owner, Young's Pharmacy, in *The Conference Board of Canada, Open for Business*.

### **TALK TO OTHER BUSINESSES AND SHARE SUCCESS STORIES**

Network with other businesses in your community or industry that have experience in making their hiring practices more accessible for people with disabilities. Find out what they did, how they did it, lessons learned, and ways to integrate these ideas into your business operations.

Organizations should share accessibility achievements at every opportunity. Many businesses are not modest about their accessibility achievements and actively promote themselves in career fairs and by sponsoring community initiatives and events. They do so, in part, to advertise their business, but also to provide guidance and leadership to others. These businesses recognize the connection between helping their community and growing their business.

55 The Conference Board of Canada, *Open for Business*, 13.

56 *Ibid.*, 12.

By communicating successes, businesses can grow demand for their products and services. At the same time, they demonstrate good corporate citizenship and earn the respect of their community. The more businesses share information on the business benefits of accessibility, the more likely other businesses are to pay attention to this information.

## REACH OUT TO LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND AGENCIES

There are numerous local organizations and agencies across Ontario that can assist employers in creating accessible and inclusive work environments for people with disabilities. (See box “[Who Can Help?](#)”)

### Who Can Help?

Below are just a few examples of the community organizations and agencies available to assist employers in making their employment practices more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities:

#### Employment

- ◆ Leads Employment Services (London, Ont.)
- ◆ Partners in Employment (PIE)
- ◆ Ability First Coalition
- ◆ Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network (JOIN) (Toronto, Ont.)
- ◆ March of Dimes Canada (various locations)
- ◆ Community Living Ontario (various locations)
- ◆ Independent Living Centres (various locations)
- ◆ Link-Up Employment
- ◆ Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)
- ◆ Live Work Play (Ottawa, Ont.)
- ◆ EARN (Ottawa, Ont.)

#### Accommodation

- ◆ Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
- ◆ Canadian Hearing Society (CHS)
- ◆ Inclusive Design Research Centre, OCAD University
- ◆ Return to Work
- ◆ Institute for Work & Health (IWH)
- ◆ National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR)

See The Conference Board of Canada's *Employers' Toolkit: Making Ontario's Workplaces Accessible to People With Disabilities* for detailed information on these and other resources that can assist employers in hiring people with disabilities and creating more inclusive workplaces for these employees.

### Spotlight: Cambrian College

Cambrian College in Sudbury, Ontario, established the Glenn Crombie Centre for Student Support, a multi-service centre that provides support for students with disabilities and that has been recognized as a centre of excellence in North America. Centre staff provide advice for accommodating people with disabilities and provide consulting services to employers. With over 1,000 students at the college using the disability services of the Centre in 2012–2013, the school is an excellent source of talent for employers looking to include candidates with disabilities in their pool of applicants. The college itself has taken advantage of the Centre's graduates and has become a leading employer of people with disabilities.

Source: Cambrian College, *Cambrian College Performance Scorecard 2009–2014*; Wright, *Tapping the Talents of People With Disabilities*.

For example, many community agencies can support businesses in hiring, training, coaching, and managing employees with disabilities. They can also provide advice on workplace modifications for both new and existing employees. In many cases, these services are provided at no cost to the employer. These organizations often have an existing database of candidates with disabilities who are searching for employment.

In addition, most Ontario universities and colleges have departments that support students with disabilities, helping with accommodations and assistive technologies. They also help with job placement and are a great source of educated and skilled talent for employers. Contacting a student disability centre is an excellent first step for recruiters who want to include candidates with disabilities in their pool of applicants. (See box “[Spotlight: Cambrian College.](#)”)

### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ONLINE RESOURCES AND TOOLS

A variety of online resources are available to assist Ontario employers in creating accessible and inclusive employment practices for people with disabilities. (See box “[Free Online Tools and Resources.](#)”)



## Free Online Tools and Resources

### GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO RESOURCES

[www.ontario.ca/AccessON](http://www.ontario.ca/AccessON)

- ◆ The website provides information on the accessibility laws and standards in Ontario, timelines for compliance, and ways for organizations to submit their compliance reports.

[www.AccessForward.ca](http://www.AccessForward.ca)

- ◆ The website has comprehensive training materials for Ontario businesses under the AODA/IASR and offers free resources to help organizations meet the training requirements under Section 7 of the IASR, including training specifically around the Employment Standards.

AODA Compliance Wizard (<https://www.appacats.mcscs.gov.on.ca/eadvisor/start.action>)

- ◆ This free online tool from the Government of Ontario will help businesses and organizations in the province determine what they have to do in order to comply with Ontario's accessibility law.

### EMPLOYERS' TOOLKIT

- ◆ In 2012, The Conference Board of Canada released the report *Employers' Toolkit: Making Ontario Workplaces Accessible to People With Disabilities*.<sup>1</sup> This free report provides practical advice for Ontario employers of all sizes about simple changes they can implement to make their workplaces more inclusive for people with disabilities plus suggestions on complying with the Accessibility Standard for Employment as set out under the AODA. These tools are organized around all the stages of employment, job advertising, interviewing, the hiring process, retention, return to work, and career development and advancement considerations.
- ◆ The tools and templates found in the *Employers' Toolkit* can be downloaded as separate stand-alone customizable Word format documents. (See *Employers' Toolkit: Making Ontario Workplaces Accessible to People With Disabilities—Companion Tools and Templates for Employers*.) These documents include resources such as checklists, tips, and techniques for businesses to help employers implement accessible employment strategies and practices.

1 Chénier and Vellone, *Employers' Toolkit*.

## KEY PRINCIPLES OF ACCESSIBLE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

In summary, some good practices on how to implement accessible employment include the following:

- ◆ *Communication*: Applicants and employees are made aware that accommodations are available and that resources and information can be provided in accessible formats.
- ◆ *Policies*: Employers have a policy or policies including developing accommodation plans for individuals when they join the organization, move into new roles, or return to work following an absence associated with an acquired disability.
- ◆ *Consultation*: Individual employees and managers discuss and develop individual accommodation plans that are updated periodically in performance discussions, when job roles change, and after disability-related absences.

For tips, tools, and good practices on how to implement employment practices that support the Accessibility Standard for Employment, see *Employers' Toolkit on Making Ontario's Workplaces Accessible*.

## CONCLUSION

The business case for employment accessibility for people with disabilities is compelling:

- ◆ People with disabilities are a vital, and often overlooked, pool of talent for employers at a time when skilled labour is becoming increasingly scarce. People with disabilities also represent a major consumer market in Canada whose potential has not yet been fully exploited by business.
- ◆ At the same time, an aging Canadian workforce will mean an increase in the number of employees with disabilities. Employers wishing to retain the key talent and experience of their older employees will need to look much more closely at employment accessibility as it relates to disability management.
- ◆ Accessible workplace employment practices will continue to be an emerging business priority in Ontario and the rest of the country. Other provinces

are watching closely the lead Ontario has taken with the Accessibility Standard for Employment under the AODA legislation.

- ◆ Too often, the concepts and benefits of accessible workplaces are not well understood and there is a tendency to focus on costs rather than on the potential returns on investment from making businesses practices more inclusive for people with disabilities.
- ◆ Research has shown that there are clear business benefits to making employment practices more accessible for people with disabilities.
- ◆ Businesses across Canada are strongly encouraged to take a lead; use many of the resources available to them; work with local community organizations, other businesses, customers, their employees, and other stakeholders to gain the support and knowledge they need to be successful in implementing more accessible employment and business practices for people with disabilities. It just makes good business sense.

*Effectively employing people with disabilities is really a metaphor for maximizing the performance of all employees and, ultimately, the performance of the organization as a whole.*

—Linkow and others, *Leveling the Playing Field*, 56.

## Appendix A

# Ontario's Legislation

### **ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA), 2005, S.O. 2005, C. 11**

- ◆ Accessibility standards under the AODA will affect approximately 360,000 businesses and organizations in the province, including government, the broader public sector, and private and non-profit organizations. The standards address five key areas: customer service, information and communications, employment, transportation, and the design of public spaces.
- ◆ The AODA recognizes that people with disabilities are a vibrant, important, and growing part of the Ontario population. By removing the barriers to participation that exist in Ontario, the AODA seeks to maximize both the inclusivity of our society and the value that people with disabilities contribute to our economy.

### **INTEGRATED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS REGULATION (IASR), ONTARIO REGULATION 191/11**

- ◆ The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) (Ontario Regulation 191/11) became law in 2011. This regulation includes accessibility standards for information and communications, employment, and transportation. Each of these standards has its own individual requirements, but all three share common requirements such as developing policies and training employees. This regulation has phased-in compliance timelines to give organizations time to work accessibility into their long-term business plan. See [table on next page](#) for compliance dates, by type of organization, for the various requirements of the Accessibility Standard for Employment.

**Table 1**

Deadlines for Compliance With Ontario's Accessibility Standard for Employment

Section of Employment Standard	Type of organization				
	Government of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly	Designated public sector organizations with 50 or more employees	Designated public sector organizations with 1 to 49 employees	Private and non-profit organizations with 50 or more employees	Private and non-profit organizations with 1 to 49 employees
Workplace emergency response information (s. 27)	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012	January 1, 2012
Recruitment (ss. 22, 23, 24)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	January 1, 2017
Employee accommodation (ss. 25, 26)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	January 1, 2017
Individual accommodation plan (s. 28)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	n.a.
Employees returning to work(s. 29)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	n.a.
Performance management, career development, and redeployment (ss. 30, 31, 32)	January 1, 2013	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	January 1, 2016	January 1, 2017

n.a. = not applicable

Source: [Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation \(IASR\)](#), Ontario Regulation 191/11.

## Appendix B

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**Business Benefits of Accessible Workplaces**

by Richard Brisbois



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