



Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-Budget Consultations: 2017 Federal Budget

**Employment for Canadians with Disabilities –
Transfer Funding through Labour Market
Agreements**

Chair: Hon. Wayne Easter, PC, MP
Clerk: Suzie Cadieux
August 2016

The job market in Canada is always changing to respond to the global market and to our local Canadian needs. Employment programs for Canadians seek to respond to these changes and help Canadians – especially those who face barriers (such as Canadians with disabilities) – to find meaningful employment.

Transfer funding through the Labour Market Agreements (LMAs) must be flexible to accommodate the economic and labour market realities of the provinces.

Funding should reflect the following two key priorities:

1. Individuals deemed “furthest from the labour market” who experience significant barriers to employment

This includes marginalized groups, such as Canadians with disabilities. Programs for individuals within these groups must have a full range of services from pre-employment support, essential skills training, job development support and on-the-job supported employment. Employment services must also have the ability to seamlessly liaise with other community supports, such as resettlement services, mental health services, and housing services, as and when necessary.

2. Businesses with high skill or changing skilled environments.

We cannot ignore the effects of technology, demographics and the environment on Canadian business. Transfer funding should be directed to respond to changes to the existing and potential (post-secondary grads.) skilled labour force. The post-secondary education system, business, unions and the employment system must be supported to proactively research and respond to trends. The exiting labour force should be re-trained within the workplace to respond to the changing work environment as changes evolve. Students, prior to entering post-secondary education, can be informed and directed to those programs which address the “skills gap”.

Current employment and skills training programs – what works best.

Specialized and flexible employment and skill development programs supported through the LMAs currently exist. These programs specifically respond to the needs of the group and clients they support once those clients have self-identified. Employment and skill training programs must be worker-centric. If a job seeker perceives they require “light touch” services, then that is where they should receive service.

For example, if an individual with a mobility disability does not self-identify as having a barrier to employment because their potential employment has only a minor physical component, they should not be placed in a service for persons

with disabilities. The system could be greatly enhanced to ensure they are directed to employment services that meet their needs.

In addition, beyond essential skills, other job requirements, especially in highly skilled work, are not well defined by business sectors. This is where sector-based organizations could work to inform employment programs about skill development relevant to the current market needs.

Awareness of employment and training programs among job-seekers

Jobseekers and potential jobseekers quickly become aware that support is available. For the most part, services within provinces are well promoted. However, access to programs, or more specifically how to navigate the “system”, can be somewhat problematic. There are many levels of government, government ministries/departments and third party providers in any one province.

We recommend that financial support be earmarked specifically for client navigation. Job seekers should have one organization (independent of the employment system) that directs the client to services in their community that are best positioned to respond to their employment needs based on how the individual self-identifies.

The employment and skills training needs that employers see as critical to address their workforce and economic objectives -- the role of employers versus government.

Business understands their emerging and/or changing markets, their labour needs, and the skills their employees need to ensure that their business thrives. Changing needs can be collectively identified and addressed through sector specific organizations.

The LMAs should support sector-specific organizations with a mandate to proactively and collectively respond to economic and labour market realities. Recommendations from the sector-specific organizations will identify critical needs within the current and future workforce.

Responding to the clearly identified needs from business sectors must be a collaborative approach between the employment services system and the education system (high school and post-secondary).

Roles:

- Business – collectively identify workforce current and future needs through sector based organizations (the demand);

- Education and the employment service system (supported through a Centre of Workforce Innovation – respond to labour needs (the supply side);
- Government - support business and the employment system, in part, through the LMAs. Ensure the objectives are fulfilled by the funded parties.

Innovative approaches and partnerships that could be used to address emerging issues and needs in the labour market

Transfer dollars should be earmarked to support a Centre of Excellence/Workforce Innovation per province or region where there are distinct labour markets and/or demographics. The mandate of these Centres should support research best practices and innovation in the employment sector with a strong link to the needs of Canadian business (working with sector specific organizations).

The changing nature of Canadian business drives labour needs so in this way business is an input into the Centre. Business is also a recipient of the efforts of the Centre through a qualified workforce.

Centres of Workforce Innovation must not only respond to the needs of the skilled labour market but also develop best practices/processes/programs to maximize the potential of individuals furthest from the labour market including, those marginalized groups (such as Canadians with disabilities).

Making employment and skills training programs more responsive (e.g. changing nature of work, increasing entrepreneurship, diverse workforce).

Employment and skills training programs and the education sector must together respond to changing labour market needs of Canadian business. This must be based on solid research and reporting from both the sector based organizations and the Centre for Workforce Innovation. Funding entities (in the case of the LMAs, provincial ministries etc.) must ensure employment programs submitted for funding specifically address the labour market within the community in which it resides and addresses the need of the job seeker. Funding should also be allocated in such a way as to avoid multiple agencies within a community serving the same target job seekers.

The kinds of labour market information most valuable in supporting informed decision making

Information for the job seeker:

- Employment/hiring potential/need for specific trades/professions/job classes;
- Entry level wage and earning potential;
- Opportunity for advancement within the job (career potential);
- Opportunities by geographic region;
- Job specific skills and the training programs (schools) where credible programs are offered;
- Physical requirements of the position;
- Education and/or experience norms for the job;
- Essential skill profiles for rated occupations.

Information for the employer:

- An understanding of the essential skills related to relevant their businesses occupations;
- Immerging markets, technology (specific to workforce development) and negative economic trends that affect labour by sector;
- Formal training programs that support the development of skilled labour;
- The business case for hiring underutilized labour market segments (there could be supportive data as a component of LMA);

Forms of engagement with stakeholders that work best? Approaches to outreach that might be considered to improve the sharing of information between labour market partners

When it comes to Canadian job seekers, business and the employment agencies which support the system, the term “stakeholder” is a diverse group. To engage a representative sample, be they selected or voluntary, to solicit opinions and/or share information is inefficient.

We recommend working through well-resourced sector based organizations (business) and Centres of Workforce Innovation (employment organizations and their clients) that would facilitate the sharing of well-researched data, needs, information, practices and employment outcomes. Stakeholders must engage with these organizations to ensure their input in considered.

Information Canadians need to better understand the outcomes of investments in employment and skills training programs

The job market in Canada is always changing to respond to the global market and to our local Canadian needs. Employment programs for Canadians seek to respond to these changes and help Canadians, especially those who face barriers, to find meaningful employment so that can support their families and be active members of Canadian society. In addition, these programs support Canadian business, the lifeblood of our economy, to develop a skilled and competitive workforce.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. Transfer funding through the Labour Market Agreements must be flexible to accommodate the economic and labour market realities of the provinces.**
- 2. Employment and skill training programs must be worker-centric.**
- 3. Financial support should be earmarked specifically for client navigation. Job seekers should have more organization (independent of the employment system) that directs the client to services in their community.**
- 4. The Labour Market Agreements should support sector-specific organizations with a mandate to proactively and collectively respond to economic and labour market realities.**
- 5. Transfer funding should be earmarked to support a Centre of Excellence/Workforce Innovation per province or region where there are distinct labour markets and/or demographics.**
- 6. Funding entities must ensure employment programs submitted for funding specifically address the labour market within the community. Funding should also be allocated in such a way to avoid multiple agencies within a community serving the same target.**

March of Dimes Canada

March of Dimes Canada was established in 1951 and is one of Canada's largest service providers and advocates for people with disabilities. Last year, we delivered more than 2.25 million hours of service to over 60,000 Canadians with disabilities.

With a wide range of programs and services offered, many of our consumers utilize more than one of our services to help them gain greater independence. Solutions for independence include employment services, attendant services, CanVet Vocations Services, financial support for assistive devices, home and vehicle modification funding, and peer support for stroke and post-polio survivors.

WWW.MARCHOFDIMES.CA

General Inquiries regarding this Submission should be directed to the following:

Steven Christianson

National Manager, Government Relations & Advocacy

March of Dimes Canada

10 Overlea Boulevard

Toronto, ON M4H 1A4

416-425-3463

schristianson@marchofdimes.ca