



Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-Budget Consultations: 2015 Federal Budget
Improving Employment for Youth with Disabilities
in Canada

Chair: James Rajotte, MP
Clerk: Christine Lafrance

July 2014

Theme of Recommendations

That the federal government explore ways to promote the hiring of disabled youth as a means of easing the transition from school to labour market activity for disabled young Canadians.

Six-Point Plan to improve employment outcomes for young Canadians with disabilities

1. Continue to support, enhance and promote programs that engage young people in the current labour market such as apprenticeship;
2. Continue to support community based employment services for young people who face other life challenges during secondary school and do not complete their education;
3. Develop an in-school vocational credit program which has an active on-the-job work component. Provide additional vocational information for youth with disabilities with the program to help them understand and advocate for their accommodation requirements;
4. Ensure post-secondary programs fill the skill requirements of business. This will require an understanding of the labour market today and as it evolves with changing technology.
5. Ensure young people with disabilities have a transitional vocational plan that can be shared with adult employment service providers.
6. For youth with complex and/or multiple disabilities offer a community based transition-to-work program which provides life, work and vocational related skills.

Specific Strategies to Support Youth with Disabilities

March of Dimes Canada has been providing employment supports to persons with disabilities since the 1960's and are very aware of their significantly higher unemployment rate. As a sub-set, young people with disabilities are no different. What has changed over the last three decades is that more students with disabilities have access to post-secondary education. This is a testament to society's progress in the area of physical and academic inclusion. Although this is good news, young people with disabilities either entering the workforce directly from high school or after a post-secondary education face even more complex challenges than their non-disabled counterparts.

March of Dimes Canada has three recommendations specific to youth with disabilities:

1. Additional In-school Module

Youth with disabilities must have equal access to career and technical education classes provided through the school system. Youth with disabilities would be provided additional training on the following:

- How to communicate clearly and confidently about their accommodation needs and disability related supports as related to their preferred job;
- How to address these support with an employer;
- How to access and work with the Office of Disability Issues to secure on-campus supports; and
- How to access and use public transportation (both the accessible and regular system). This component is often overlooked but critical to further education and work success. Upon leaving school, the public transportation system is often critical for acquiring and maintaining employment. Students must be provided mobility training to ensure community access.

2. Development of a Vocational Transitional Plan

Most school systems develop specific individual education plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities. Vocational and career training goals should be clearly documented in the IEP. Prior to graduation, regardless of the student's decision to enter the workforce directly or attend post-secondary education, a transition plan must be developed between the student and the in-school vocational advisor. This plan should include the student vocational history, vocational options and provide a detailed road map should the requisite skill and/or experience still need to be gained. This should include access to the existing adult community based employment services system. This type of transitional planning happens in several US States. Yet, as a long time provider of adult vocational services, March of Dimes' staff rarely see this type of documentation in Canada. Vocational transition plans would allow us to get the person into the workforce faster.

3. Transitional Life and Vocational Program for High-Needs Youth with Disabilities

Due to disability related issues and other social and economic factors some young people leave secondary school without achieving their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. These individuals lack critical life skills that are a precursor to decisions around job choices and independent living. To address this, March of Dimes Canada developed the LIFE program to assist youth with disability to develop the confidence, life experiences and decision-making skills required to

live independently and make choices related to their future employment and related education and training.

Research has shown that early unemployment increases the likelihood of future unemployment, affects job satisfaction and future earnings. Youth unemployment is a stubborn problem which will require the full participation and collaboration of government (at all levels), the educational system, business and the community on a variety of solutions.

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.

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