**National Meeting/Teleconference of the**

**ESDC Employees with Disabilities Network ~ EwDN ~**

**Thursday, October 1, 2015**

**Discussion Notes / Action Items**

**Opening remarks by interim co-chairs André Demers and Jeffrey Willbond:**

* Membership to the EwDN has grown to over 200.
* EwDN membership includes both employees with and without disabilities.
* The EwDN a safe forum for all – to bring forward thoughts, ideas, questions, issues. It will also serve as a consultative body.
* Minutes will go out in the form of action items (not a record of discussions).

**Remarks by Vicki Cunliffe, Director, Human Resources Services Branch:**

* HR Services Branch is responsible for the Employment Equity and Diversity Program at ESDC.
* HRSB will aim to address the feedback, issues and concerns raised in this forum through departmental policies and practices put in place.

**Deferred to later date:** *The Need for Open Conversations About the Invisible Disabilities*: Presentation by Vidya ShankarNarayan, Director General, Enterprise Services (IITB) and member of The Royal’s Women for Mental Health Board –.

*ACTION ITEM:*

* *Secretariat will invite Vidya ShankarNarayan and include “The Need for Open Conversations About the Invisible Disabilities” presentation on the agenda of a future EwDN meeting/teleconference.*

Given the number of EwDN members and the size of the group registered for this meeting/teleconference, participants who were not able to voice their questions, concerns and comments during the hour are encouraged to submit them to the GD mailbox for response.

*ACTION ITEM:*

* *Participants are asked to submit questions, concerns and comments they were unable to express during this session to the EwDN general delivery mailbox at*

 *NA-RESEAU\_EMPL\_HANDICAPES\_DISABILITIES\_NETWORK-GD**.*

**Questions from participants:**

1. **Question:** Will the EwDN membership list be shared in the interest of networking within regions?
**Answer:** The membership list will be distributed in December 2015. If you do not wish to have your name disclosed, please contact the general delivery mailbox at NA-RESEAU\_EMPL\_HANDICAPES\_DISABIITIES\_NETWORK-GD before close of business November 27, 2015.
2. **Question:** Can the Department’s process related to managing duty to accommodate situations be explained?
**Answer:** The question should be addressed as part of the December 3, 2015, presentation. Departmental tools on [iService](http://iservice.prv/eng/hr/dta/index.shtml) are also available.
3. **Question:** What are the repercussions for any levels of management who knowingly choose not to employ the departmental Guidelines on Duty to Accommodate (and process for disability management) in terms of opportunities, accessibility and privacy?
**Interim answer:** This question will be redirected to HRSB for response.
4. **Question:** What protection or recourse is there for an employee who is asked by their manager to resubmit medical information when their situation has not changed and to whom does this information go once it is submitted?
**Interim answer:** This question will be redirected to HRSB for response.
5. **Question:** What is the Department doing in terms of Website accessibility for employees who are blind?
**Interim answer:** This question will be redirected to HRSB/IITB for response.
6. **Question:** The Department is concerned about implementing software for the public that is fully accessible – when is it going to start applying the same standard to departmental applications like SharePoint, SAP, etc., that are inaccessible to employees who use certain adaptive tools?
**Interim answer:** This question will be redirected to HRSB/IITB for response.
7. **Question:** In the context of accommodating employees, what do the words “up to the point of undue financial hardship” mean?
**Answer:** The question should be addressed as part of the December 3, 2015, presentation.

**Comments from participants:**

* **Comment:** The stress aspects of not being accommodated have a cost to the Department – these are recognized manifests to potential leave in terms of disability (mental stress being the most common reason for leave).
* **Comment:** It is important that messages to managers regarding accommodation (including funding) are consistent, and that support is provided to managers dealing with accommodation issues.
* **Comment:** For regions, the cost for accommodating comes from operational budgets so there may be differences in terms of execution. For the sake of consistency, there is a need for centrally managed duty to accommodate funding and centrally managed intervention.
* **Comment:** Not all accommodation requires a high level of funding (new equipment, fixtures, etc.). For example, it could involve a minor adaptation of duties and/or process to temporarily accommodate an injury until an employee is able to perform at 100%.
* **Comment:** Responses in the Public Service Employee Survey could provide context and a potential link to addressing disability issues raised via the survey (inform the wellness strategy?).

**Terms of Reference (ToR):**

* A draft was distributed with the Calendar invitation.
* The governance section has been expanded to reflect a national structure.
* EwDN members are asked to submit suggestions in the context of managing a wider (national) audience, e.g., sub-working groups with a themed approach (policy and systemic issues, technology, physical access), etc.

*ACTION ITEM:*

* *Participants are asked to submit their feedback related to the ToR to the EwDN general delivery mailbox at*

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**Moving forward – next steps, future meetings, etc.:**

* The EwDN will be action-focused in order to bring about needed changes and improvements for employees with disabilities.
* We are looking at fully accessible ways to share ideas and to engage with the EwDN community. Participants are asked to share their ideas with respect to information sharing, e.g., iService, GCPedia, GCConnex?
* Subject matter experts will be invited to future meetings to speak about issues discussed at this session, including: Duty to Accommodate; Mental Health; Assistive Technologies.
* Volunteer (or volunteers) to provide secretariat support to the EwDN (record meeting action items, etc.) required. Sebastienne Moran [W-T Region] offered; other members interested in providing support can submit their name through the general delivery mailbox.

*ACTION ITEMS:*

* *Participants to submit their ideas for accessible ways to share information and engage the EwDN membership to the general delivery mailbox at*

 *NA-RESEAU\_EMPL\_HANDICAPES\_DISABILITIES\_NETWORK-GD**.*

* *Andre and Jeffrey to coordinate/arrange for subject matter experts to present at future EwDN meetings/teleconferences.*
* *Participants interested in volunteering for a secretariat role to submit their name to the general delivery mailbox at*

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