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**Employees with Disabilities Network [EwDN]**

**Réseau des employés handicapés [REH]**

# Teleconference February 23rd, 2017

Minutes/ Briefing Overview

## Welcome

André Demers welcomed participants to the meeting. He stated that we had an issue with the CART transcript not running yet (it came up halfway through the meeting).

## Report from the Chair and Vice-Chair

**Chair / Co Chair Andre Demers & Jennifer Leenhouts**

* Andre stated that we participated in the inter-departmental Chairs and Champions committee meeting (60+ people).
	+ Discussed the action plan on accessibility and worked on the development of an implementation strategy -- paying attention to the targets and items like invisible disabilities.

* The US recently adopted updates to **Section** **508 and 255 Standards**, which is about technology and telecommunications accessibility standards related to accessibility relevant to persons with disabilities.
	+ These standards are now aligned with what the rest of the world is doing. For example the previous Section 508 Web Accessibility standards pre-dated version 1 of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
	+ These new standards will align with what the rest of the world is using as web accessibility standards (WCAG 2.0). It is anticipated that this will have a significant positive impact on accessibility issues.
* Jennifer mentioned that work is underway on our **intranet** site and will include information minutes, presentations,links, champion information, and possibly an open forum.
	+ We will also be including a link for an [online consultation](https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/consultations/optional-protocol.html) related to the review of Canada’s Accession to the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities As a network we encourage all members to participate in this initiative. The public consultation is open from February 16th to March 16th 2017.
	+ A link to the [intranet site](http://iservice.prv/eng/hr/employment_equity/key_links/EDN.shtml) will be embedded into the minutes from the Feb 23 meeting.
* The work plan is currently in translation and will be sent out shortly and posted on the intranet site.
	+ The work plan’s current fiscal 2016-2017 the same goals will extend into fiscal 2017-2018.
* The annual interdepartmental **Blueprint 2020 Innovation Fair** will be held in May 2017.
	+ The ESDC EwDN has been asked to host a room at the event. The fair gives us a chance to learn from each other and highlight our everyday excellence in servicing Canadians.
	+ This year with Canada 150 celebrations it's will include some anniversary pieces as well. EwDN plans to participate and will showcase the employees with disabilities network.
	+ A plan will be developed and will include presentations and mini workshops to be held through out the day. We are very excited about this opportunity.

## Update on Accessibility Legislation

**Office for Disability Issues (ODI): James Walker**

Overview of the accessibility legislation

* James stated that consultations were held across Canada.
	+ Minister Qualtrough launched formal public consultations in June 2016.
	+ It is wrapping up at the end of February 2017.
	+ This is the first major consultation on disability and accessibility since the mid 90’s
	+ Set out to make it a substantive engagement and as broad as possible.
	+ Set new standards to make these consultations the most accessible ever.
	+ Ensured that people could engage through multiple channels.
	+ In all 18 town hall discussions and 9 themed round table discussions took place.
	+ Themes were Employment, Procurement, Service delivery, Information and Communications Technologies. Culture change, Active Living,
	+ In November there was a national youth forum where the PM attended.
	+ Documentation was available in multiple formats.
	+ Online consultations yielded over 3200 responses.
	+ Organizations have also submitted formal input.
	+ Key issues and barriers have been identified.
	+ A report on input and analysis should be made available by end of May or early June 2017.
	+ Work will be on “how” the issues should be addressed,
	+ Still in the early stages and ODI is interested in hearing any ideas the network may have. Consistent priorities identified as 1) government to lead by example and be a model of accessibility 2) legislation must have a strong enforcement component, 3) federal spending should have accessibility requirements attached, 4) need to establish standards to establish a floor as well as performance based goals and embed technology, 5) government needs to work together at all levels with a coordinated approach and implementation strategy within the Canadian Government. Inclusion mechanisms are to be put in place. Work is moving quickly and there has been significant progress internally on this action plan. It is anticipated that there will be good government support as we work to get out ahead of the legislation.
	+ We’ve heard about what the barriers are but not really how they need to be addressed.
	+ It is really going to be a lot about culture change.

### Q & A

* timelines

*first draft of the legislation to be completed by the end of 2017.*

* Standardization

*legislation isn't going to solve all of the issues and what is needed is a broader culture change. There will be initiatives to promote understanding, awareness and inclusion.*

* Andre mentioned that there is currently work underway at the interdepartmental Chairs and Champions committee as well as with central agencies (TBS, PSPC, SSC) to develop an accessibility strategy and action plan to implement this within the Federal Public Service by sometime in 2019.

## Address from the Champion and introduction of the Deputy Minister of Labour

## Diversity Champion for ESDC James Gilbert

* James omplimented EwDN on the workplan, “ You produced an excellent workplan and I’m excited about that”.
* James recognized the expertise of the committee and talked about finding inspiration by the effort of members to continually work on these issues with hope, positivity, and perseverance.

Open dialogue with the champion included issues within workplaces and invisible disabilities.

## Deputy Minister of Labour Lori Sterling

* She shared some of her history with mental health
* 1 in 5 Canadians are affected by mental health.
* Deputy Minister Sterling stated that all 700 inspectors have taken the Mental Health First Aid course.
* These inspectors sometimes suffer trauma themselves because they sometimes investigate serious injuries.
* The investigations these inspectors have to conduct are often difficult because of the circumstances and it can affect their mental health.
* After every inspection there is a debrief with the inspector following every investigation
* Disability issues overlap with mental health issues,
* She encouraged network members to come forward

Introduced as leading the vision of a Barrier Free Canada. Lori shared with us her personal story and her advocacy of disabilities and mental health. She also touched on the federal survey, She talked about three areas; 1) encouraging members to feel that it’s safe to come forward, 2) partnering together – manager training/skills, and 3) peer support.

### Questions with the Deputy Minister included;

* significant impact of this approach

 *hopeful that we will learn from the recent mental health survey and implement positive change.*

* expanding training to team leaders

 *feels that everyone should have the training but at the very least managers must be competent in accommodation. Mental Health First aid training is a must and is highly recommended. Some tools are online on ESDC website, so I would encourage you to encourage others to take these courses.*

* Mental health -. What about mental health?

*there is still that stigma out there. confidential. The link between disability and mental health and the responsibility of accommodation.*

* Accessibility and advancement – example of imposed limitations.

 *this is what is front and centre and is driving the reform initiative, The reform legislation, has programming, public awareness, and it gives government a hopeful direction.*

* Disability movement – stepping forward and stepping backwards

*Deputy Minister Sterling talked about some of the positive moves forward and the importance of continuing on. Again mentioned the Mental Health First Aid - best course she has ever taken.*

Note:

As part of the departmental [Integrated Mental Health Framework](http://iservice.prv/eng/hr/mhw/mental_health_framework.shtml) is establishing a national Mental Health Peer Support Program. The goal is to use a “grassroots” approach to create a program that responds to the needs of employees. To achieve this, a series of consultations is taking place across Canada until the end the fiscal year. Watch for any communications on this subject in your email.

## Closing Remarks

Andre stated that Human Resources Services Branch would like to hold a focus-group of 8 to 10 from EwDN in order to have a discussion around recruitment and possible strategies specific to our members. Participants will be chosen on a first, come first served basis with an objective of having representation at all levels and within all regions. Send an email to the generic inbox if interested. We will try and get a good cross section of people. The workplan will be on our intranet site.

Thank you to all for participating in our network.



Next meeting ***March 23, 2017***