**SLIDE # 1**

**Good morning. Welcome to St. John’s. Thank you for the opportunity to present to this conference. My name is Barb Neis. I am the Co-Director of the SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Research. SafetyNet was founded in 2001 at Memorial University. We initially focused our research and KT on occupational health in marine and coastal work. Since 2007 we have been a type 2 Centre at Memorial with core funding from the university and have broadened our focus to include regional priorities and gaps. Today we are going to introduce you to one of the national initiatives we are involved in that is providing a particularly important opportunity for SafetyNet and Memorial University.**

**The Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP) is a transdisciplinary initiative on the future of work disability policy in Canada. Presentation draws on slides produced by the CRWDP leaders and by SafetyNet.**

**What Do We Mean By Work Disability Policy within the Centre for Research in Work Disability Policy?**

**We mean policy related to any federal, provincial or territorial program in Canada that shapes income security and labour-market engagement for work-disabled individuals. Work-disabled individuals may have disabilities caused by work, disabilities from outside of work, or some combination of the two.**

**We include employers in the disability policy system as they play an important role in shaping opportunities for work-disabled individuals and have specific obligations under some programs and legislations.**

**Physicians of all kinds also play key roles in the work disability policy system.**

**SLIDE #2**

**Emile and Ellen**

**SLIDE # 3**

**MISSION – to conduct partner-informed research on how to improve Canadian work disability policy to help all people access employment and income security.**

**SLIDE # 4**

**Work disability context – why CRWDP?**

**We have, in Canada, a complex work disability policy system with multiple programs at the provincial and federal level**

**In addition- work is changing – more precarious employment, more service sector employment, and the working population is also changing – for instance, the labour force is aging.**

**These changes, as well as findings from ongoing research, are influencing the types of disabilities and the boundaries between disabilities caused by work and those originating outside of work. They are creating additional challenges for the work disability policy system to help address in order to maximize access to employment for all Canadians including those with disabilities, and to enhance their income security.**

**The wider economic context is adding to these challenges including periods of recession, economic volatility and related pressures to restrict eligibility for disability support programs.**

**SLIDE # 5**

**CRWDP is seeking to bridge the social and organizational silos that have tended to separate those responsible for and concerned about injuries and illnesses caused by work – the work injury system including researchers, workers compensation policy-makers, injured workers activities and others …**

**and the disability policies, programs and research associated with the social security policy system. The social security policy system includes disability researchers, social security policymakers, disability rights activists. Very little work has been done that bridges these silos.**

**There are strong pressures in Canada for injured and ill workers to return to work as soon as possible and programs to support this. There is also a strong movement to include more people with disabilities in the workforce. These pressures are sometimes coupled with the threat of loss of access to compensation/insurance. How might bringing together research on these different challenges benefit both?**

**SLIDE # 6**

**For those who are unable to return to or find employment, there is a patchwork of Canadian work disability programs that those disabled by work and those with other kinds of disabilities try to access or from which they may cobble together support. These include:**

**CPP/QPP**

**Employment Insurance Sickness Benefit**

**Workers’ compensation**

**Social assistance disability benefits**

**Employment-based short- and long-term disability plans**

**Disability tax credits, registered disability savings plan**

**Veterans’ benefits for disability**

**Other kinds of programs- car insurance, travel insurance, etc.**

**SLIDE # 7**

**One of the interesting aspects of these social and organizational silos are some fundamental differences between the two systems. The work injury system relies mainly on a medical and socio-legal framework and the social security policy system is more grounded in a human rights and medical model frame. Programs informed by the medical model tend to focus on the individual, including on their biological structure and function. Those that are based on a socio-medical model such as those of some private insurers and some workers compensation programs consider the health problem and the physical and social environment perspective together. Finally programs based on a human rights model focus more on environmental and social barriers to social/economic inclusion—and things like international conventions ratified by Canada.**

**What is meant by inclusion? Essentially strategies and practices designed to identify and remove such barriers as those relating to communication, mobility and attitudes that hamper the ability of persons with disabilities to participate fully in society including in work similar to persons without disabilities (**[**https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability-strategies.html**](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability-strategies.html)**) A good example of an inclusion strategy is universal design – designing products, communications and work environments so they can be used by the maximum number of people including those with disabilities.**

**SLIDE 8**

**What is the CORE MANDATE of CRWDP?**

* **Providing a forum for within- and cross-provincial and national dialogue on challenges and opportunities for improving the Canadian work disability policy system;**
* **Identifying problems and challenges associated with program coordination and complexity;**
* **Identifying relevant and favourable alternative approaches to system design and service provision through select comparisons with countries and small scale trials;**
* **Mobilizing knowledge developed within and outside of the initiative in order to inform policy; and**
* **Building capacity for research and knowledge mobilization on the topic of work disability policy and labour-market engagement of individuals with disabilities.**

**SLIDE # 9**

**The Objective of the Centre for Research in Work Disability Policy is to identify how people, when disabled, can be better retained and integrated into the Canadian labour market by answering the following Key Questions:**

1. **How well does the Canadian disability policy system serve the current and emerging needs of working-age individuals when disabled in terms of employment support and opportunities?**
2. **For which individuals and in what labour-market contexts does our disability policy system work well/not work well and why?**
3. **What are the key opportunities for policy and program improvement in the short and long run?**

**Slide #10**

**CRWDP uses a population health focus- work disability touches most people at some point over their lifetime…**

**People with disabilities represent about 15.5% of Ontario’s population**

**More than 50% of Canadian families are touched by disability**

**And the aging of the Canadian population means more working age adults will be affected by chronic and episodic health condition.**