WORKING POLICY

News, views and research from the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP)

In This Issue

CRWDP 2015 National Symposium & National Policy Round Table

Keynotes and Theme Presentation Videos available at www.crwdp.ca.

CRE-MSD and CRWDP Team up with CSA to Develop a Canadian Standard for a Work Disability Prevention Management System

Every year, tens of thousands of Canadians become temporarily or permanently work disabled, seriously compromising their participation in the paid labour force and thereby becoming excluded from the numerous health advantages of workforce participation. According to 2012 figures, about one in 10 Canadians of working age live with some form of disability—whether physical or mental, chronic or acute, episodic or temporary, work-related or otherwise. Many of these individuals face tremendous barriers getting into or staying in the labour market due to their health condition or impairment. According to some estimates, about 800,000 Canadians with disabilities—about half of whom have a post-secondary education—are currently unemployed despite being able and willing to work.

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Group, in collaboration with Centre of Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD) and the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP) have engaged multiple stakeholders to develop best practices in the field of work disability prevention management in the form of a national standard for use by organizations to systematically manage work disability prevention efforts, including their return to work policies and programs and the recruitment and retention of workers with disabilities.

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Beyond the Social Model of Disability

By John Rae and Robin East

The following is a summary of a longer article by these authors

Persons with disabilities have been present from time immemorial, and our mere presence has caused untold discomfort to members of the dominant society, who wish we would stay in the back rooms or simply go away. Of course, we haven't gone away, we have come out of the back rooms, and we aren't going to go away! In fact, with advances in medical science, and an aging population, the percentage of persons with disabilities will continue to rise, and with continuing advances in accessibility, we are more visible and able to participate in our communities than ever before.

Since the 1850s, we have witnessed an amazing progression from a time when persons with disabilities were generally hidden away in back rooms "out of sight and out of mind" through the development of the charity ethic, the professional and medical models and later to the human rights and social models of disability.

The medical model of disability is often cited by its growing number of critics as the basis of unintended, yet ongoing oppression, social degradation and exclusion of people with disabilities from society. Scarce funding is excessively directed towards medical research when those same resources could be more productively used towards fighting poverty and implementing programs that will break down existing societal barriers, promote universal design and foster the inclusion of persons with disabilities into regular society.

The charity and medical ethics have some similarities to the Professional Ethic. Decisions about "what's best" for us are largely controlled by others and we are expected to passively acquiesce with and follow their plans for our lives.

In 1975, the UK organization Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation introduced the social model of disability, which identifies systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) as the main factors that "disable" people. While new paradigms to examine disability have fostered a more positive discourse on disability, even this more positive analysis focuses primarily on philosophy and lacks a plan of action to help us change the power imbalance and create new mechanisms that will enable us to become truly equal in society.

Thus, it is now time to examine a new way of analyzing disability - a "rights holder" model.

Today, the term "stakeholder" remains in widespread use by governments, researchers, social agencies and other decision-makers. The term implies that any person or group that has a "stake" in an issue should be engaged or given input into any decision being considered. However, we and our own organizations must be seen as much more than just merely another "stakeholder." We who will feel the full impact of any disability legislation, policy, service, or program must be seen as Rights Holders and Rights Holders must be fully engaged and accorded a preeminent role in directing the methods for engagement and participation to ensure outcomes will fully promote our right to equality and increased opportunities.

Canadian Standard for a WDP-MS

continued from page 1

In June 2016, the three organizations co-hosted a webinar to inform stakeholders about plans to go forward with the development of a Canadian Standard for a Work Disability Prevention Management System (WDP-MS). A recording of the launch is available at the CSA Communities of Interest site. The webinar had more than 500 registrants, providing a good indication of the importance for developing a standard in this area.

"The standard will be based on current research evidence, successful practices in the field, and the viewpoints from stakeholders—employers, workers and worker representatives, injured workers and persons with disabilities, clinicians, workers' compensation agencies, insurance companies, policy maker and researchers" notes Amin Yazdani, a CRWDP Collaborator and Research Assistant Professor at the University of Waterloo. "We have a core team of academics and policy experts helping gather the evidence base" adds Emile Tompa, CRWDP's co-director. Yazdani and Tompa are spearheading the initiative on behalf of CRE-MSD and CRWDP.

The focus of this initiative is to set out requirements for a comprehensive work disability prevention management system. A management system is a framework that includes detailed step-by-step methods for developing and maintaining policies, procedures and processes to ensure an organization is able to achieve its goals and objectives on an ongoing basis. The WDP-MS standard will be designed to integrate with other CSA management systems, including the CSA Z1000 Occupational Health and Safety Management System, the CSA Z1003 on Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and CSA Z1004 on Workplace Ergonomics. It will also be integratable into ISO standards such as ISO 9001 for quality management system and ISO 45001, the new health and safety management system standard. In addition to developing this national Standard, the team plans to develop an implementation guide to support the introduction of the standard in organizations of different sizes and in different sectors.

The primary beneficiaries of a published standard are workers in the Canada's labour force of 18 million and Canadian employers, both public and private. Canada will be the first country in the world to have a national standard for a work disability prevention management system.

2015-2016 Activity Report to be released Early 2017
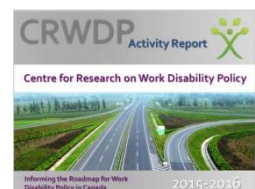
CRWDP Seed Grants
Competition results from the second round

In 2015, CRWDP held its second seed grant competition. The competition was open to all CRWDP participants and partners. We funded 6 applications for a total funding envelope of approximately $60,000. Following are highlights of funded proposals.

Jetha, A. (PI), Breslin, C., Furrie, A., an Smith, F. With partner National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS). "*Work integration needs analysis of the school-to-work transition for young adults with disabilities in Ontario*".

Koehoorn, M. (PI), Patterson, J., Hansen, N., Rockhill, D., and Finkelstein, R. With injured worker partners and the BC Federation of Labour. "*Investigating vocational rehabilitation outcomes among permanently injured workers*".

Morris, J. (PI), Koehoorn, M., Gutray, B., and Dyson, J. With partners Disability Without Poverty Network, Canadian Mental Health Association in BC, BC Disability Alliance. "*Helping Make Ends Meet? – Developing research capacity to better understand the effects of British Columbia's Annualized Earnings Exemption in relation to people living with mental illness and/or Addictions who are working and receiving disability assistance*".

Provencher, Y. (PI), Coutu, M-F., and Laberge, M. With partners Le regroupement des assistés sociaux et assistées sociales du Témiscouata (RASST) and Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail du gouvernement du Québec (CSST). "*Dispositifs d'insertion en emploi pour des adultes avec des incapacités: enjeux et perspectives au sein de deux régimes publics d'invalidité*".

Ricciardelli, R. (PI), Hall, A., de Boer, C., Sitter, K., and Small, S. With partners the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities Newfoundland and Labrador (COD-NL), and Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS). "*When your work makes you sick: Exploring disability policies for workers within government funded protective services*".

Steenstra, I., Cullen, K.(Co-PIs), Irvin, E., Scott-Marshall, H., and Van Eerd, D. With partners The Graham Lowe Group, CBI Health, Pacific Coast University, Canadian Institute for the Relief of Pain and Disability, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba, and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario. "*A review of policy changes to promote work participation in older workers*".

A Focussed Third Call Results in 4 New Seed Grants

In the fall of 2016 the 4 provincial clusters were each awarded a seed grant to map different parts of the Canadian work disability policy system. Mental health is a common theme throughout the four studies. Each cluster is comparing their province with another– British Columbia with Alberta, Ontario with Nova Scotia, Québec with Manitoba, and Newfoundland with New Brunswick. Stay tuned for more details of these studies in the year ahead.

Partner Profile
Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work

The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW) began to emerge with the passage of the Federal Employment Equity Act in 1986. Over time, CCRW took on increasingly broader projects and activities related to improving mainstream employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Its mandate is to promote and support meaningful and equitable employment of people with disabilities. CCRW is the pre-eminent Canadian centre of excellence on the economic, social and psychological aspects of disability as it affects people's ability to seek, acquire and retain productive employment. As an innovator and agent of change, it builds partnerships, develops skills, shares knowledge and influences attitudes. The organization has offices across Canada, and supports persons with disabilities to secure employment, retain employment and return to school through six different support programs. In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, CCRW served 1,325 Canadians with disabilities. 76% of clients served successfully found or retained employment or returned to school. CCRW served 516 employers of many sizes and industries in support of inclusion in the workplace.

Including Canadians with Disabilities in the World of Work
A celebration of progress made by people with disabilities and injured workers, and opportunities for the future

In commemoration of Canada's sesquicentennial, CRWDP community partners are planning to host a two-day event to celebrate diversity and inclusiveness in the world of work with a focus on people with disabilities and injured workers. Plans are to host the event in Winnipeg, Manitoba in the fall of 2017. Representatives from a broad range of disability and injured worker organizations will be invited attend to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, as well as review, discuss and celebrate their histories. Tremendous progress has been made in the past 150 years – although there is still a long way to go. These histories inform where we are at as a society today in terms of diversity and inclusiveness in the world of work, and directions for the future. The event will be an opportunity to break down barriers of stigma and marginalization, and promote diversity and inclusiveness in work as a win-win proposition. Targeted event outcomes include a broader knowledge about the diverse histories of people with disabilities and injured workers, new energy to advance Canadian experiences, social innovation from individual experiences, enhanced networks, and a platform for developing future leaders. Stay tuned for more details.

Student Fellow Profiles

Benedicte Calvet, Université de Québec á Montréal

Benedicte is a PhD Candidate at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), in an interdisciplinary program. She is supervised by Dr. Nicole Vézina and Dr. Marie Laberge. Benedicte's research work focuses on developing an integrated work disability prevention system which means the coordination of different levels of prevention in workplaces, such as primary, secondary and tertiary prevention actions. She also integrates sex/gender considerations in her thesis.

Sabrina Hossain, McMaster University

Sabrina joined the Master's of Science Program within the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University in 2016, and is supervised by Rebecca Gewurtz. Sabrina's work as a rehabilitation professional led her to pursuing research related to work disability policy, with a focus on workplace accommodations and workplace supports for individuals with mental illness.

Andrea Jones, University of British Columbia

Andrea is a PhD candidate at the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia, and is supervised by Dr. Mieke Koehoorn. Andrea's research examines the role of mental health in return to work following workplace musculoskeletal injury. In particular, she looks into determinants of common mental health disorders like depression and anxiety and the impact of these disorders on disability outcomes. Through this, she aims to inform return to work policy and practice surrounding workers with both a physical injury and a mental health disorder.

Aleksandra Stefanovic, Memorial University

Aleksandra is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Medicine, Department of Community Health and humanities, in Memorial University, and is supervised by Rick Audas and Stephen Bornstein. Her study will provide answers on how to increase effectiveness and outcomes of supported employment program delivery. Her work aims to increase opportunities for persons with mental illness to successfully integrate into the labour market, improve their health outcomes, and to live more fulfilling lives. Aleksandra notes "I am grateful to be part of the CRWDP initiative and to be in a position to contribute to the national dialogue on the issue of disability and employment".

Academic Profiles

Rebecca Gewurtz, McMaster University

Dr. Rebecca Gewurtz is an Assistant Professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University. Rebecca's research interests revolve around employment, community participation, disability benefit systems and income security, with a focus on people living with mental illnesses and other disabilities. Her research program examines employment for people with disabilities, and how benefit systems and employment supports are experienced in practice.

Rebecca is leading a SSHRC funded study examining policy strategies for improving employment opportunities for people with mental illness as they enter disability income support systems in Canada. As a CRWDP co-investigator, Rebecca is involved in projects exploring the experiences of injured workers, people with intermittent work capacity, and workplace accommodation policies and practices.

Rebecca notes "I joined the CRWDP in order to connect with researchers in work and disability policy across Canada and contribute to emerging scholarship in this area." Within the initiative she wears several hats, including Ontario Cluster Co-lead and Member of the Student/New Researcher Capacity Building Committee. Several of her students are also CRWDP Student Fellows.

Rebecca is also involved in several seed grant projects with CRWDP partners and participants.

Rose Ricciardelli, Memorial University

Dr. Rose Ricciardelli is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Memorial University. Her research is centered on social health and gender, specifically masculinities. Her primary research interests include evolving understandings of gender, vulnerabilities, and experiences and issues within different facets of the criminal justice system. Specific to disability policy and practice, Rose's current work includes focus on the experiences of correctional officers and police officers given the high stress, high risk, and potential for compromised psychological, physical and social health inherent to the occupation. Her research explores prison culture, desistance, and the coping strategies, risk perception and lived experiences of prisoners, correctional officers and police officers. To this end, she has started to examine healthcare experiences among federal prisoners and also the mental health needs of correctional and police officers—and how such needs are met or fail to be met. She is involved in strategies to create positive change for persons post-incarceration, as exemplified in her work with Klink Coffee and John Howard's Society of Toronto, and in the pan-Canadian study of Post-Traumatic Stress among first responders and correctional staff led by Dr. R.N. Carleton (University of Regina). She, however, always remains focused on the translation of empirical evidence into policy.

Research Highlights
Recent reports posted on the CRWDP website

1. Gewurtz, R., Premji, S., Holness, L. October 2016. **Injured Workers Who Experience Challenges Returning to Work: Pathways and Consequences**. This study explores the experiences of injured workers in Ontario who do not return to work successfully following a work-related injury.
    Click here to access the full report.

2. Furrie, A., Gewurtz, R., Porch, W., Crawford, C., Haan, M.,Stapleton, J. October 2016. **Episodic Disabilities in Canada**. This study gathered field data to gain a better understanding of the employment issues faced by people with episodic disabilities in Canada.
    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report.

3. Torjman, S., Makhoul, A. October 2016. **Disability Supports and Employment Policy.** This study explores access to disability supports and links to paid employment. Two components of supports are considered: technical aids and equipment, and personal services such as attendant care and home care.
    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report

4. Finkelstein, R. October 2016. **Safety Information under Neoliberalism: The Chilean Case.** This study explores the production and supply of safety information under a neoliberal regime, where economic incentives and competition rather than regulations, supervision and enforcement, comprise the principal ways by which safe workplaces are promoted.
    Click here to access the full text of the article.

5. King, A. July 2016. **Making the Law Keep Down the Costs. Why Canada's public systems designed to support unemployed workers with a disability are making the decisions that they are**. This study documents changes made to workers compensation, Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, and welfare since 1990. It argues that welfarization of disability was a consequence of these reforms made by provincial and federal governments in the common pursuit of cutting costs.
    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report.

6. Galer , D. April 2016. **Life and Work at the Margins: (Un)employment, Poverty and Activism in Canada's Disability Community Since 1966.** This study investigates the extent of poverty in the disability community over time, including ways in which experiences of poverty stimulated active resistance through anti-poverty and disability rights groups.
    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report.

7. Furrie, A.D., Lero, D.S., D'Aubin, A., Ewles, G. June 2016. **Willing but Unable: A population in waiting.** This study provides a profile of Canadians with disabilities who comprise a talent pool that is sometimes overlooked. It includes an overview of the employment environment and challenges faced by these individuals.
    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report.

Research Highlights
Recent reports posted on the CRWDP website (Continued)

8. SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health and Safety in partnership with The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities-Newfoundland and Labrador (COD-NL). July 2016. **Disability Support Services in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada: Impacts on labour market participation for individuals with disabilities.** This study explores potential barriers to labour market participation related to disability support services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report.

9. MacEachen, E., Du, B., Bartel, E., Tompa, E., Stapleton, J., Kosny, A., Petricone, I., and Ekberg, K. **Work Disability Policy Scoping Review Database.** In this study, over 700 articles were identified that focused on government-led or mandated programs related to work integration, including helping people with disabilities enter the labor market, return to work, stay at work or receive income support.

    Click here to access the database.

10. Prince, M. April, 2015. **Policies and Practices on the Accommodation of Persons with Invisible Disabilities in Workplaces: A Review of Canadian and International Literature.** This study describes how employers can create a workplace culture that encourages disclosure by people with invisible disabilities. Prescriptions include being clear about the competencies required for a job and providing as much information as possible in advance and in accessible formats.

    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report.

11. Tompa, E., Buettgen, A., Mahood, Q., Padkapayeva, K., Posen, A., Yazdani, A. **Evidence Synthesis of Workplace Accommodation Policies and Practices for Persons with Visible Disabilities.** This study is a review that includes details of specific accommodations made by employers, as well as helpful tools and recommendations to assist employers with the development of accommodation policies and procedures for persons with disabilties.

    Click here to access the full report (pdf); click here to access word version of the report.

12. **Work Disability Prevention Management System: A proposal for a national standard to Canadian Standard Association (CSA).** This Canadian Standard will specify requirements for a Work Disability Prevention Management System (WDPMS). The proposal provides background information and outlines the nature of the standard.

    Click here to access the proposal.

13. **An Environmental Scan of Past Policy Initiatives Addressing Coordination Issues in the Canadian Work Disability Policy System.** This study investigates past efforts made to improve coordination among Canada's disability support programs. Policy documents and reports from these efforts have been gather and summarized.

    Click here to access summaries of the initiatives and related documents.

Cluster Updates
Provincial clusters busy with knowledge mobilization activities

British Columbia Cluster Annual Forum Doubles in Size

If one needs any evidence that CRWDP is gaining momentum, you have only to look to the BC cluster's Annual Forum held this spring. The event had 42 participants in attendance, comprised of academics, students, community members, policymakers and other partner representatives.

The day began with a keynote by John Stapleton on the welfarization of the disability support system in Canada. Stapleton, a policy expert and former provincial policymaker with the Ontario Government, provided compelling evidence on the growth of social assistance recipiency of people with disabilities across the country. Four cluster students gave short presentations of their own research in a segment they called the World Café on Research. Many participants rated this segment as their favourite of the Forum. The day's activities included update on seed grant, other cluster developments and national activities.

To wrap up the day, Paralympian Danny Letain and research lead Lukas-Karim Merhi presented their work on the world's most advanced bionic arm for below-the-elbow amputees. Letain and Merhi noted that they and their bio-engineering team at Simon Fraser University had a crowd funding campaign underway to support attending the Zurich Cybathalon. The competition features adaptive technology from around the world. Thanks in part to the support and interest generated at the Forum, the team reached its funding goals and was off to Zurich in October.

Participants left the Forum energized and engaged. "I loved the day, in particular the participatory aspect of it. And what a great way to end the day! I feel inspired." – Forum Participant.

Québec Cluster Hosts a Daylong Colloque at an International Conference

The QC cluster held a Colloque entitled « Incapacité au travail et politique publique de l'emploi » this past spring at the ACFAS conference in Montréal. Hosted by Ysabel Provencher and Marie-José Durand, the daylong session included presentations by Alain Noël, Richard Gravel, Sylvain Lacroix, Marie-France Coutu, Normand Boucher and Daniel Côté. Program details are available on the CRWDP website. In attendance were a number of cluster students and partner representatives. The day ended with a wine and cheese social for attendees. See photos below.

Marie-José Durand, Normand Boucher and Ysabel Provencher

Christian Larivière, , Ellen MacEachen and Daniel Côté

Chantal Sylvain, Michael Bernier, Pascale Mailette and Marie-France Coutu

Emile Tompa and Andrée Bouchard

Cluster Updates
continued from page 10

Newfoundland Cluster Hosts a Large, Multidisciplinary Conference on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

In response to a suggestion made during the Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) cluster Roundtable on Inclusion (spearheaded by two cluster community partners—Coalition of Persons with Disabilities NL and Empower NL) held last fall, the cluster formed a new group at Memorial University called the Disability Inclusion Group (DIG-MUN for short). This group's intention is to promote disability inclusion at the university and work toward the development of a Disability Studies curriculum for Memorial University students. A first meeting of the group was held in the spring, and a second meeting was held this fall.

Two of the cluster's academics, Stephen Bornstein and Rose Ricciardelli, hosted a large multidisciplinary conference at Memorial entitled "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Causes, Consequences, Responses". It ran from July 31st to August 2nd and featured a number of noteworthy guest speakers. The Conference brought together experts, stakeholders and members of the public with expertise and interest in a wide range of issues related to PTSD as it affects military personnel, police, first responders and other occupational groups as well as their families. Details about the conference can be found at the following website: http://www.ptsdconference.mun.ca/. The event was a great success!

Ontario Initiating Policy Pods this Fall

Over its last few meetings the Ontario cluster has put forward a number of efforts and developed resources that identify work disability policy issues and challenges. The next important phase of their efforts is to influence policy in order to address the issues and challenges identified. In order to foster action, cluster leads Marcia Rioux and Rebecca Gewurtz have been working with other cluster members to launch policy pods.

Policy pods consist of students, researchers, community partners and policy decision-makers. They are co-led and supported by a researcher and a student. Three pods have been formed: 1) Building and transforming employers capacity - Research Lead Marcia Rioux and Student Lead Douglas Waxman, 2) Income replacement policy- Research Lead Rebecca Gewurtz and Student Leads Pamela Lahey and Dana Corfield, and 3) Enforcement and monitoring of right to work - Research Lead Cameron Crawford and Student Lead Tammy Bernasky.

Each pod is focused on policy issues that has the potential for immediate change. Each is developing an action plan and will focus on implementing the plan. Strategies include setting meetings with policy decision-makers to share research findings and evidence on policy issues and strategies, creating policy briefs, joining existing groups that are working on policy change, and bridging dialogue between employers and policy-makers. Policy pod members will provide expertise in policy opportunities and government agenda and support implementing the plan.

Beyond the Social Model of Disability

Rights holder organizations must take the lead on advocacy in the areas of legislation, public policy, and/or group issues. This is the rightful role of our consumer organizations, and they must be adequately resourced to enable them to discharge their important and rightful roles. Leaving our equality to others hasn't worked! We rights holders ourselves must also become more of the solution to our oppression.

The phrase, "nothing about us without us" is a familiar phrase heard throughout the Disability rights movement, and increasingly, we expect to be viewed in a different light, not merely as one more stakeholders group. We expect increased representation in all decision making bodies.

The ongoing inadequate level of representation of persons with disabilities and our organizations has made it easy for the needs and aspirations of our community to be simply ignored or even callously disregarded when important decisions about us are being made. It is now time to move beyond the social model of disability and focus more on actions, outcomes, and concrete changes.

Whether in the university departments where the research agenda is too often determined, the ministry offices where decisions about government policies are made, the newsrooms where decisions about which stories will be covered, the political party offices where platforms are developed, the boardrooms where decisions about hiring policies are set, the offices where decisions about the manufacture of new products are determined, or the municipal planning departments where policies about community access are determined, the one seventh of our population, persons with disabilities, have never been adequately represented. If we are ever to make significant progress towards achieving the elusive goal of the International Year of the Disabled Person 1981, "Full Participation and Equality," this must change!

Redressing some of our historic chronic level of unemployment would bring some of us out of poverty and would provide organizations with badly needed in house expertise on disability that could lead to new products, services and programs. This could make Canada the envy of many other nations that are also grappling with bringing persons with disabilities into the mainstream after their own ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities.

A strong business case has been made; the moral imperative has been clearly articulated; and the benefits of bringing more of us into the economic mainstream through meaningful employment is obvious. It's time to work more collaboratively together to ensure a better future for the next generation of rights holders with various disabilities.