



Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability

2012-2017

Progress Report May 31, 2016



New Brunswick
Nouveau Brunswick

Premier's Council on the
Status of Disabled Persons

Conseil du Premier ministre
sur la condition des
personnes handicapées



Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons

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2012-2017**

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Background

In 2011, stakeholders and government departments began work on a new action plan to increase the number persons with a disability who have a job in New Brunswick. This consultation and engagement process resulted in a document called "*An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012-2017*", and this work built on a previous plan that expired several years earlier.

The current Employment Action Plan (EAP) includes thirty-eight recommendations designed to respond to issues identified during this consultation and engagement process.

The EAP is now in the fifth and final year of its planned implementation.

The following provincial government departments have been involved in leading the implementation of the EAP:

- **Social Development**
- **Human Resources**
- **Education and Early Childhood Development;**
- **Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.**
- **Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat; and**
- **Health**

In addition, the **Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons** has also been involved in development and implementation of the EAP from the beginning.

The EAP is ambitious, requiring shifts in thinking, policies, programs and services in New Brunswick intended to impact literacy, training, education, and employment supports for persons with a disability.

A number of initiatives have been quickly accomplished within existing resources, while others have taken longer to implement and have required new investments.

Many of the 38 recommendations are inter-connected and touch on the following themes:

- Preparing youth with a disability for employment;
- Accessing post-secondary education and training;
- Providing pre-employment supports;
- Removing barriers to employment;
- Strengthening community supports;
- Encouraging employers;
- Facilitating Self-Employment; and
- Enhancing public awareness.

In 2015 the coordinating role for the EAP was assumed by the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons.

Created by the Government of New Brunswick, the Premier's Council is responsible for stakeholder consultation and engagement, research and study, and information sharing on issues related the status of persons with disabilities in this province.

The Premier's Council advises the provincial government on disability issues and policies. The Council also encourages and monitors government compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Council's partnerships within government and with the not-for-profit sector are key factors as stakeholders work together to improve the supports and outcomes for persons with disabilities, and their families, in New Brunswick.

Structure

The Premier's Council consists of a Chairperson and twelve members appointed by the Lieutenant- Governor in Council.

Mandate

Under the *Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons Legislative Act*, the Council shall:

- Advise the Minister on matters relating to the status of persons with a disability;
- Bring before the government and the public matters of interest and concern to persons with a disability;
- Promote the prevention of disabling conditions;
- Promote employment opportunities of persons with a disability; and
- Promote access by persons with a disability to all services offered to the citizens of New Brunswick.

In addition, the Premier's Council may:

- Receive and hear requests and suggestions from individuals and groups concerning the status of persons with a disability;
- Undertake research on matters relevant to the status of persons with a disability and recommend research areas that can be studied by governments, voluntary associations, private business and universities;
- Recommend programs concerning the status of persons with a disability;
- Make referrals to, and consult and collaborate with government agencies; voluntary associations, private business, universities and individuals on matters which affect the status of persons with a disability;
- Appoint committees consisting of members and other persons who are not members of the Council;
- Propose legislation, policies and practices to improve the status of persons with a disability; and
- Publish the reports, studies and recommendations that the Council considers necessary.

The Premier's Council also produces a number of Information Directories including:

- The **Directory of Services** Offered to Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick;
- **Transportation Directory** for Persons with Disabilities and Seniors in New Brunswick;
- **Career Counseling**, Job Placement Services and Training Opportunities.
- **Financial Aid** for Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick;
- **Sources for funding** assistance for rehabilitation equipment, barrier free access, income assistance, medical expenses, housing, funding for community and non-profit organizations, and recreation.

This update is the third annual Progress Report on the implementation of the EAP.

While there are 38 specific recommendations in the Employment Action Plan and many include additional actionable items. In total, there are 65 distinct recommended actions included in this Action Plan.

All of the 65 recommended actions, are in various stages of progress or have been completed.

Many community stakeholders have been very active in developing and implementing the Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability and continue to work with several GNB departments to encourage and guide it's full implementation.

Summary

Status of Recommendations

Glossary

- CCNB:** Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick
DGS: Department of Government Services
DHR: Department of Human Resources
ECO: Executive Council Office
EECD: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ESIC: Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
GNB: Government of New Brunswick
NBCC: New Brunswick Community College
PCSDP: Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons
PETL: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
PO: Office of the Premier
SD: Department of Social Development

Completed, 30	In progress, 35	Not started, 0
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#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
1	GNB adopt and implement a government-wide “Employment First” policy.	DHR & PCSDP	In Progress
2	GNB appoint a point of responsibility within GNB for overseeing development, implementation and coordination of all employment oriented policies for persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
3	GNB, in consultation with key stakeholders, develop, adopt and begin to implement a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability.	EECD	In Progress
4	Develop and implement formal partnerships with community organizations that support persons with a disability to achieve transition and employment goals.	EECD	In Progress
5	Review and make necessary changes to experiential workplace programs.	EECD	In Progress
6	Develop and provide high school students with a disability, who have completed grade 11, with structured summer “intern” work opportunities.	EECD	In Progress
7	GNB commit to increasing participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education by:		
7.a	Establishing benchmark data on the number of students with a disability currently attending post-secondary institutions and establishing targets for increasing participation rates over the next 5 years.	PETL	Completed

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
7.b	Establishing a consultation process to develop clear guidelines for requirement of a psycho-educational assessment.	EECD	In Progress
7.c	Establish consistent guidelines for providing complete and consistent documentation required for students to apply for entrance into post-secondary institutions.	EECD	Completed
7.d.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of students admitted to NBCC/CCNB through special admissions processes so that a minimum of 40 students are participating in NBCC and CCNB programs by 2015 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that special admissions are available to all students with a disability who have had a modified high school program and who cannot apply through the regular admissions process 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing access to NBCC and CCNB programs for working age adults with a disability who are out of high school 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of seats per program 	PETL	Completed
7.d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring adequate navigational supports for youth with a disability who apply to NBCC/CCNB to have success in their college program. 	PETL	Completed
7.e	Modify the TESS program to allow for 'bridge funding" for disabled students awaiting student loan approvals; and an increase in the amount of extra time afforded disabled students to complete their programs, from 30% to 50%.	PETL	Completed
7.f	<p>Improve the Canada Study Grant approval process by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a 10 working day standard for approving applications for student financial aid. 	PETL	Completed
7.f	Should CSG funding be approved but not be in place at the beginning of the academic year/term, providing provisional support funding through post-secondary institutions subject to repayment once the CSG funding is received.	PETL	In Progress
7.g	Developing and implementing an education/professional development program aimed at post-secondary education administrators on the requirements to provide reasonable accommodations, Universal design, for Learning strategies and inclusive practices.	PETL	Completed
8	For students with a disability attending post-secondary education review existing supports, research models of support in other jurisdictions, identify current gaps in support in NB and establish a plan for addressing any support gaps.	EECD	In Progress
9	GNB, in partnership with private, public sector, and community stakeholders, design, develop and implement a structured Intern Program for persons with a disability.	PETL	In Progress
10	An ad hoc government/community working group be established to review existing pre-employment services and recommend one or more Department(s) to take the lead for "pre-employment services" for persons with a disability.	PETL	In Progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
11	GNB adopt a person-centered pre-employment model for persons with a disability.	SD	In Progress
12	A multi-faceted program of awareness and promotion be developed to inform persons with a disability of employment supports available and how to access them.	PCSDP	Completed
13	GNB ensure that new social assistance policies and programs for persons with a disability actively support the belief that people are employable and:		
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for wage exemptions that will encourage people to work and retain more income from employment closer to recognized poverty levels; 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow persons with a disability to retain access to health related benefits if they are employed and leave social assistance. 	SD	Completed
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that people's needs for pre-employment supports (including transportation) are addressed through active employment planning and integration of pre-employment support programs and funding; 	SD	In Progress
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training for GNB employees to better understand the goals, policies, benefits, and communication strategy for effectively accessing community service providers; 	SD	In Progress
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for a new approach for addressing the needs of youth with a disability who are still in high school; 	SD	In Progress
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new service delivery model for proactive pre-employment and employment planning. 	SD	In Progress
14	Establish a joint government/community working group to develop a strategy to ensure that accessible and affordable transportation is available throughout NB.	ESIC	In Progress
15	Prior to a new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for persons with a disability, hold consultations with stakeholders to develop an appropriate employment service delivery and funding model for persons with a disability.	PETL	Completed
16	Review current Employment Assistance Services for Persons with a disability with a focus on underserved populations and geographic disparities.	PETL	Completed
17	As part of the new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for persons with a disability, initiate a longer term (minimum three-year) contracting process.	PETL	Completed
18	Develop and implement access to professional development opportunities for staff that provide services under EAS contracts.	PETL	In Progress
19	Improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports by:		
19.a	Developing and implementing a provincial Job Coach/Mentor Training Program.	PETL	In Progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
19.b	With NBCC and CCNB modify curriculum within human services programs to ensure the inclusion of a learning module(s) on job coaching/mentoring strategies.	PETL	In Progress
19.c	Establishing a salary standard range for Job Coaches who have successfully completed a training program in job coaching.	PETL	In Progress
20	Establish an active formal network of employment agencies serving persons with a disability.	PETL	Completed
21	In consultation with stakeholders, undertake a comprehensive review of the Adult Development Activities, Programs and Training (ADAPT) program.	SD	In Progress
22	Review and reform the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) Program and guidelines.	PETL	Completed
23	Revise the Disability Support Program so that adults under age 65 with more significant disabilities who require longer term disability-related supports for training and employment can receive funding after they have exhausted TESS funding.	SD	In Progress
24	Recruit, mentor and retain an additional six qualified interpreters so that the number of available qualified interpreters increases from six to twelve within three years.	PETL	In Progress
25	Adopt a ten-day approval standard for equipment and technical aid applications under the Health Services Program.	SD	In Progress
26	GNB take measures to increase the number and percentage of persons with a disability in the provincial public service by:		
26.a	Developing and enacting provincial employment equity legislation;	DHR	Completed
26.b	Establishing a provincial public service diversity and inclusion policy and recruitment strategy to increase the representation of persons with a disability; and	DHR	Completed
26.c	Reforming the Equal Employment Opportunities Program to provide more participation of persons with a disability in the public service.	DHR	In Progress
27	Review and revise the New Brunswick Opportunities Network (NBON) tendering process for bidders on provincial contracts to demonstrate how persons with a disability are included in their workforce and measures they will take to hire persons with a disability if they are successful in their bid.	DGS	Completed
28	Conduct a review of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service and develop a renewal plan.	PETL	Completed
29	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by		
29.a	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by Developing and implementing a provincial tax credit (similar to the U.S. Work Opportunity Tax Credit);	PETL	In Progress

#	Recommendation	Lead	Status
29.b	Providing wage subsidies and supports for employers that participate in the proposed Intern Program for Persons with a disability;	PETL	In Progress
29.c	Providing 'rebate grants' to employers that hire persons with a disability to cover the cost of Mandatory Employment Related Costs; and	PETL	In Progress
29.d	Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by developing a communication strategy to build awareness amongst employers of incentives and a simplified application process.	PETL	In Progress
30	Establish a self-employment initiative for persons with a disability that will include:		
30.a	A short-term research project on current best practices for supporting self-employment for persons with a disability.	PETL	In Progress
30.b	A review of how the current network of enterprise agencies can support persons with a disability and their self-employment options.	PETL	In Progress
30.c	An investigation of the provision of financial support to persons with a disability interested in self-employment, including the use of current programs (e.g. Workforce Expansion).	PETL	In Progress
30.d	A review of current Social Assistance policies so they can be improved to support persons with a disability who want to undertake self-employment opportunities.	PETL	In Progress
31	Develop and implement a new communications plan to improve the visibility of the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons as a central resource for people seeking assistance with employment goals.	PCSDP	In Progress
32	Hold a Premier's Forum every two years on employment for persons with a disability to: better engage employers; generate interest in hiring; and promote awareness and interest in the Employment Action Plan.	PSCDP	Completed
33	Hold an annual provincial conference on employment for persons with a disability to share knowledge and best practices.	PETL	Completed
34.a	Hold discussions between stakeholders on research into policy and best practices for employment of persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
34.b	Establish a research agenda into policy and best practices for employment for persons with a disability.	PCSDP	Completed
35	Establish baseline data for all recommendations to allow for measurement of progress.	PCSDP	In Progress
36	An Employment Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group be established to oversee the Action Plan.	PCSDP	Completed
37	An annual report on the implementation of the Employment Action Plan prepared and released publicly during Disability Awareness Week.	PCSDP	Completed
38	An annual meeting between community partners, Ministers, key deputy ministers and the Premier be held to discuss progress, issues and challenges.	Premier's Office	Completed

Detailed Information on Implementation

Recommendation #1

The Government of New Brunswick adopt and implement a government-wide “Employment First” policy that:

- *Reflects that every working aged New Brunswicker with a disability is presumed to be employable;*
- *Provides that the first objective of government policies and programs will be to support persons with a disability to work to their fullest potential;*
- *Acknowledges that persons with a disability have opportunities to plan careers and enjoy employment opportunities beyond entry level types of occupations; and*
- *Acknowledges that persons with a disability may still need access to disability-related supports for goals and activities that fall outside of employment.*

In Progress

The Department of Human Resources and the Premier’s Council, in collaboration with disability stakeholders, is working to identify a mechanism to ensure a government-wide “Employment First” approach is adopted regarding the employability of persons with a disability. The Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program is the key access point to implement improved hiring for persons with a disability in the Government of New Brunswick.

Recommendation #2

The Government of New Brunswick appoint a key point of responsibility within government for overseeing the development, implementation and coordination of all employment-oriented policies for persons with a disability.

Completed

The Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons assumed this role in April 2015.

Recommendation #3

The Government of New Brunswick, in consultation with other governments, private sector and community partners, develop, adopt and begin implementation of a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability, with a particular focus on assisting youth make a successful transition from school to employment or post-secondary education or training. This policy must address:

- *Standards of practice for New Brunswick schools and school districts, such as standards of practice relating to transition planning that should start no later than grade 8;*
- *The need for transition programs and practices to be guided by an ‘Employment First’ approach;*
- *The roles of Guidance programs in supporting students with a disability and requirements for ratios of guidance counselors to students using ratios supported by current best practice research (research suggests an optimal ratio of 1:350);*
- *The roles of schools and school districts in supporting students with a disability to apply for and access post-secondary education and training;*
- *Follow up surveys with students with a disability two years after leaving high school to determine their participation in post-secondary education or training and employment; and*
- *A clear description of the partnership between government departments and community organizations and the respective roles and responsibilities.*

In Progress

Pending the assignment of policy and planning personnel to this file by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, work is underway on the development of a provincial policy that establishes guidelines to support students as they transition from high school, with a particular focus on youth with disability.

Recommendation #4

Develop and implement formal partnerships (including funding partnerships) with community organizations that have experience with supporting persons with a disability to achieve transition and employment goals. Such partnerships may be designed to provide assistance with career exploration, transition to work planning and work preparation strategies.

In Progress

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will formalize partnerships with disability stakeholder groups as part of the transition policy that is scheduled for development.

Recommendation #5

Review and make necessary changes to experiential workplace programs (such as Co-Operative Education in the Anglophone sector or Education cooperative in the Francophone sector) to ensure that:

- *All students with a disability have access to community workplace learning opportunities in regular workplaces (and baseline data and rates of participation in these opportunities are determined and kept);*
- *Community workplace learning opportunities match student strengths and career/employment goals;*
- *Appropriate workplace supports and accommodations are provided;*
- *Job coaching and mentoring support is provided by people who have been trained in providing this support;*
- *Transportation needs to community workplaces are addressed; and*
- *Specific learning and skill development goals are developed and employers are engaged as partners in the evaluation of experiential workplace learning.*

In Progress

Within the framework of the high school renewal process, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will ensure that inclusive practices within experiential workplace settings will be reviewed.

Recommendation #6

Develop and provide high school students with a disability, who have completed grade 11, with structured summer "intern" work opportunities (see Recommendation # 9 for further details).

In Progress

The Department of Post-secondary Education, Training, and Labour will involve stakeholders to operationalize this initiative.

Recommendation #7

The Government of New Brunswick commit to increasing participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education by undertaking the following measures:

- a) *Establishing benchmark data on the number of students with a disability currently attending post-secondary institutions and then establishing targets for increasing participation rates over the next 5 years.*

Completed

- b) *Establishing a consultation process to develop clear guidelines for requirement of a psycho-educational assessment (e.g., who requires one, who is responsible for coordination and payment).*

In Progress

The Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development and Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, are working to develop clear guidelines for the requirement of a psycho-educational assessment as a requirement for Canada Study Grants. This work is complicated by rigid federal guidelines for this program, as well as resource allocation challenges related to the timing of psycho-educational assessments completed within the public school system.

- c) *Following a review of the current process for New Brunswick school districts, establish consistent guidelines for providing complete documentation required for students to apply for entrance into post-secondary institutions. This should include psycho-educational assessments for students with a learning disability and documentation of accommodations that a student received during high school and establishing consistent guidelines for documentation. This requirement should be included in the proposed policy on transition for students with a disability (see Recommendation # 3).*

Completed

- d) *Working with NBCC and CCNB to review and expand special admissions processes for students who do not meet the regular entrance criteria. This expansion should be aimed at:*
- *Increasing the number of students admitted to NBCC/CCNB through special admissions processes so that a minimum of 40 students are participating in NBCC and CCNB programs by 2015 (currently admissions are between 25 and 30 per year).*

Completed

- *Ensuring that special admissions are available to all students with disability who have had a modified high school program and who cannot apply through the regular admissions process.*
- *Providing access to NBCC and CCNB programs for working age adults with a disability who are out of high school*

Completed

PETL has established a working group involving Departmental staff, key disability stakeholders, and college representatives. This group has worked on determining an equitable process for all students with a disability and with regard to the special admissions process. Since both colleges have a different admission process, a communications plan with the members of the New Brunswick Disability Executives' Network will be developed in order to help learning support services discuss and plan at least two years in advance for students who have a permanent disability and need help to organize specific services and accommodations.

- *Increasing the number of seats per program;*

Completed

- *Ensuring that adequate navigational and planning supports are in place to assist youth with a disability to apply to NBCC and CCNB and to have success within their chosen college program.*

Completed

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour funds several initiatives intended to attract, support, and retain students in post-secondary education, including students with disabilities. Funding also supports the Accessibility Centres in the Brunswick Community Colleges (NBCC) and the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB), as well as at universities. Funds have also been provided for additional support positions at NBCC and CCNB and for the purchase of assistive technology to help students with a disability enjoy greater success in their chosen college program.

- e) *Modifying the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) program guidelines to allow for:*
- *'Bridge funding' for students who enter post-secondary education on a modified program but who later transfer to a regular education program. Funding should be maintained until applications for student loans and grants have been completed and approved; and*
 - *An increase in the additional time allowed to complete a program from the current 30% to 50% to better support students who have been accommodated through a reduced course load or extended program length.*

Completed

f) *Improving the Canada Study Grant approval process as follows:*

- *Establishing a 10 working day standard for approving applications for student financial aid so that needed supports are in place for students with a disability at the beginning of the post-secondary program; and*

Completed

- *Should CSG funding be approved but not be in place at the beginning of the academic year/ term, providing provisional support funding through post-secondary institutions subject to repayment once the CSG funding is received*

In Progress

Currently, most post-secondary educational institutions provide support services for students with disabilities while the Canada Study Grant approvals are being processed. Note-taking and tutors are available and some universities offer Accessibility Centers that are equipped with adapted technologies. However, to date, post-secondary educational institutions do not advance grant funding to students who are waiting for a Canada Student Grant application to be processed.

- g) *Developing and implementing an education/professional development program aimed at post-secondary education administrators and instructors on the requirements to provide reasonable accommodations, Universal Design for Learning strategies and inclusive practices.*

Completed

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour provided funding in 2015 to l'Université de Moncton and CCNB to update the professional development program and site for their professors and instructors.

The online course/resource for professors, instructors and support staff provides practical tools for general use and by disability type, video testimonials by instructors and students, scenarios, and related resources. It is organized for quick and easy access, as well as for in-depth study. The Anglophone site was launched June 2014.

The Department also funded a symposium on Universal Design in November 2014 for University and College staff members.

Recommendation #8

Review the current support provided to students with a disability attending post-secondary education to engage in and complete career exploration and decision making activities. Through the review, conduct research on models of support in other jurisdictions, identify any current gaps in support in New Brunswick and establish a plan for addressing these gaps.

In Progress

In consultation with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, both departments have agreed this recommendation is more in line of the EECD mandates. In response to this recommendation, EECD is looking at the transition needs of all students, including those with disabilities, through the Response to Intervention approach. Currently, EECD is implementing CAMET's career development framework entitled "Future in Focus". This 5-year plan has the following goals:

- Support for career development using a coordinated whole school approach, organized by career development themes;
- Implementing age-appropriate career development programs, services or supports;
- Promoting career development as an integral part of student learning;
- Ensuring that each student graduates with a personal career plan;
- Providing multiple opportunities for students to engage in community-based/experiential workplace learning;
- Providing professional learning for educators to ensure effective and engaging career development opportunities for students; and
- Ensuring access to timely, reliable, and relevant career and labour market information (including information on how to access disability stakeholder groups and services).

Although the lead department for this recommendation has changed, PETL will continue working in collaboration with the EECD on this issue.

Recommendation #9

The Government of New Brunswick, in partnership with private and public sector employers and community stakeholders, design, develop and implement a structured Intern Program for persons with a disability that would have the following features:

- *The development of a concrete and time limited skill development and learning plan for interns with a disability;*
- *The use of current Work Ability Program funding to provide a participation salary to interns to allow for a maximum of a 6 month paid internship;*
- *The involvement of employers in the design and evaluation of the intern's skill development and learning plan;*
- *The provision of job coach/mentor or other necessary supports and accommodations through the TESS program;*
- *The provision of a certificate of participation for interns with an accompanying skills profile for interns who complete the program;*
- *The active promotion of the Intern program to persons with a disability and New Brunswick employers; and*
- *The provision of support and information to employers to successfully hire an intern.*

In Progress

PETL has approved a research proposal for an "Intern Program" from Canadian Deafblind Association on behalf of NBDEN. This research project will be conducted on a provincial, national and international level. The goal of this project is to research and determine effective intern

opportunities / strategies for persons with a disability and to propose a recommended model for implementation in New Brunswick. The final report is expected in the Spring of 2016.

Recommendation #10

An ad hoc government/community working group be established as quickly as possible to:

- a) *Conduct a short-term review of existing pre-employment services, identify gaps in services and develop a plan to address the gaps; and*
- b) *Make a recommendation to the Government of New Brunswick regarding the designation of one or more Department(s) that will take the lead for the development, coordination and funding of the following “pre-employment services” for persons with a disability:*
 - *Literacy education and training, including Deaf literacy;*
 - *Social and independent living skills training and support (including skills to address workplace stress, anger management, and empowerment);*
 - *Work preparation learning on employer expectations, interviewing, and proper behaviour within the workplace;*
 - *Mental health and resiliency;*
 - *Discovering and determining personal interests and skills to support job matching;*
 - *Support for volunteer activities;*
 - *Computer skills training;*
 - *GED training;*
 - *First Aid & CPR training;*
 - *Career exploration assistance (including job shadowing);*
 - *Workplace Essential Skills training such as writing, numeracy, communication skills, and working with others; and*
 - *Complementary support (such as attendant support, transportation and childcare).*

In Progress

This recommendation involves establishing an ad-hoc group to look at a number of actions related to pre-employment, identifying existing services, and gap identification. This recommendation is also linked to the new service delivery model being developed at the Department of Social Development. PETL has not yet established this ad hoc committee and is seeking government direction on how best to proceed in addressing this recommendation.

Recommendation #11

The Government of New Brunswick adopt a person-centred pre-employment model that will include a protocol and template for developing an individualized pre-employment plan to guide planning and decision making. The protocol should at the very minimum:

- *Establish who can provide planning assistance;*
- *Require the provision of information about prior learning;*
- *Require that specific pre-employment services and benefits be identified;*
- *Require information to demonstrate how pre-employment activities and services will support general or specific employment goals and outcomes;*
- *Require the establishment of a time-frame for pre-employment services as well as a plan to “exit” pre-employment and move to employment search and employment; and,*
- *Require that the proposed cost of pre-employment services be identified.*

In Progress

The Departments of Social Development and Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour continue to collaborate on the provision of services for all clients including persons with a disability. Our main focus has been on enhancing the Career Development Opportunities (CDO) program to provide services and supports designed to assist more clients to prepare for and find work. Highlights include:

- Reduction in an individual case manager’s caseload size which allows more time for the development of an individualized career plan with each client.
- Partnering on a joint Career Practitioner training strategy to ensure SD case managers have the skillset needed to help clients improve their employability; and
- A Motivational Interviewing (MI) training strategy was launched in October 2015 to provide CDO case managers with advanced skills and tools to help clients who are hesitant to engage in career/life plan development.

A new experiential learning continuum has been launched and is designed to serve 400 SD clients through a continuum of services over the next three years. This 9 month program will include pre-employability skills, job preparation skills and knowledge, workplace essential skills training and a work experience component. Key program features of the Continuum include:

- stable funding and support for participants throughout the program;
- training content in line with real entry- level job openings;
- a link to real employers looking to hire; and
- a more comprehensive approach linking personal development, job preparation and experiential learning.

Recommendation #12

A program of awareness and promotion be developed that will inform persons with a disability of all employment supports that are available and how these can be applied for and accessed. This promotion should be multi-faceted and be provided in a variety of accessible formats.

Completed

Recommendation #13

As part of its social assistance reform initiative, the Government of New Brunswick will ensure that new social assistance policies and programs for persons with a disability reflect and actively support the belief that people are employable and:

- *Provide for wage exemptions that will encourage people to work and retain income from employment such that people are able to have incomes that more closely approximate recognized poverty measures;*

Completed

- *Allow for persons with a disability to retain access to health related benefits even if they are employed and leave social assistance (if they do not have access to employer sponsored health benefits and if their incomes fall below a determined yearly amount);*

Completed

- *Ensure that people’s needs for pre-employment supports (including support for transportation) are addressed through active employment planning and the integration of pre-employment support programs and funding;*
- *Provide training for government employees to ensure that there is adequate understanding of the goals, policies and benefits of the new program as well as strategies for effectively communicating eligibility for benefits and how people can access community service providers;*

- *Provide for a new approach for addressing the needs of youth with a disability who are still in high school*
- *Develop a new service delivery model for proactive pre-employment and employment planning.*

In Progress

The Department of Social Development has adapted many policies and offered supports to better serve clients, which include:

- Increased tuition contribution from 50% to 75% for social assistance clients accessing post-secondary training. As a result, clients now only have to borrow 25% of their tuition costs.
- Increased income support rates (living allowance) from \$125 to \$150 per week.
- Providing employment counselling and job search services for Social Assistance clients who are awaiting or are in receipt of Employment Insurance (EI).
- Increased number of Work Services Coaches working with work-ready Social Assistance clients which ensured prompt access to job obtaining and retention services.
- Maximized the federal funding provided under federal labour market agreements for additional programming and supports to increase the labour market participation of social assistance clients.

In addition, the Department referred more than 2,105 Social Assistance clients (from January 1-December 31, 2015) to PETL programs or services as part of the client's career development or return-to-work action plan. It is expected that this dramatic increase in the rate of referrals will continue throughout the 2016-17 fiscal year. The continuation of this partnership will lead to more clients developing to their full potential, greater independence and will ultimately lead to additional training or employment.

Two new programs have also recently been launched:

- **In Motion and Momentum:** An innovative 2-part modular program, for delivery to small groups of Social Assistance clients meant to assist the participant move along a continuum toward greater awareness and acquisition of life and employability skills. This is not a "typical" workshop series in that it doesn't involve much direct teaching. Rather, the approach is to provide opportunities for participants to experience success, pride, respect, connection and achievement and, through these experiences, to build self-esteem, confidence, a sense of personal control, skills and motivation to build their future. The program helps clients to be prepared for career planning.
- A new experiential learning continuum has been launched and designed to serve 400 SD clients through a continuum of services over the next three years. This nine month program will include pre-employability skills, job preparation skills and knowledge, workplace essential skills training, and a work experience component. Key program features of the Continuum include stable funding and support for participants throughout the program; training content in line with real entry-level job openings; a link to real employers looking to hire; and a more comprehensive approach linking personal development, job preparation and experiential learning.

Recommendation #14

No later than the fall of 2012, establish a joint government/community working group to develop a strategy to ensure that accessible and affordable transportation is available throughout New Brunswick, with a focus on ensuring access to transportation for persons with a disability for the purposes of pre-employment activities, as well as post-secondary education, training and employment. The transportation strategy will address:

- *The possible creation and subsidization of accessible transportation services in rural areas of the province;*
- *Access to funding support for transportation for people to access pre-employment activities, as well as post-secondary education and training opportunities;*
- *Access to funding support for transportation for people to participate in employment opportunities where public forms of transportation are not available or are not accessible, suitable or affordable for specific persons with a disability.*

In Progress

The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, the Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons and the Departments of Transportation and Infrastructure, Environment and Local Government, and the New Brunswick Social Policy Research Network have done some initial work to address this recommendation. These stakeholder organizations are currently awaiting direction from government on how best to proceed in addressing the transportation challenges faced by many New Brunswickers, including those with disabilities.

Recommendation #15

Prior to the implementation of a new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for persons with a disability, hold immediate consultations with community stakeholders to develop an appropriate employment service delivery and funding model for persons with a disability. As part of this proposed consultation, the following issues need to be addressed:

- *Ensuring equal access to EAS services for people with all types of disability;*
- *Ensuring equal access to EAS services within all geographical areas of the province; and*
- *The corresponding competency of contracting agencies to address a variety of disabilities, varying needs for support, and communication, linguistic and cultural requirements.*

Completed

Recommendation #16

Review current Employment Assistance Services for Persons with a disability with a focus on identified underserved populations and geographic disparities with the goal of:

- Identifying regions where additional services are required to assist such persons to transition to employment; and*
- Establishing additional services that may be required.*

Completed

Recommendation #17

As part of the new contract management framework for Employment Assistance Services for serving persons with a disability, initiate a longer term (minimum three-year) contracting process to assist agencies to:

- Hire and retain qualified and experienced staff;*
- Engage in longer term planning; and*
- Provide consistent quality services for persons with a disability.*

Completed

Recommendation #18

To ensure on-going education on achieving successful employment outcomes for working age persons with a disability, develop and implement a mechanism for funding, providing and

coordinating access to professional development opportunities for staff who provide services under EAS contracts.

In Progress

PETL has funded a series of professional development sessions in NB for our service providers under External Agency Service (EAS) contracts. For example, PETL has provided support to the New Brunswick Career Development Action Group (NBCDAG) since 2013 and funded the first EAS Network workshop in 2015.

Recommendation #19

Improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports throughout New Brunswick by:

- a) *Initiating a Request for Proposals to develop and implement a provincial Job Coach/Mentor Training Program. The training program should run initially for a minimum of three years, include an evaluation component, and be renewed thereafter based on further identified training needs.*
- b) *Undertaking discussions with NBCC and CCNB on modifying curriculum within human services programs to ensure the inclusion of a learning module(s) on job coaching/mentoring strategies.*

In Progress

PETL has approved a research proposal for “Job Coaches” led by the Neil Squire Society on behalf of NBDEN. This research project will be conducted on a provincial, national and international level. The goal of this project is to identify barriers to access needed support services for persons with disability in the workplace related to Job coach support. The final report is expected in Spring 2016.

- c) *Establishing a salary standard range for Job Coaches who have successfully completed a training program in job coaching.*

In Progress

While the provision of job coach/mentor supports and salary levels is a sector responsibility, the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will evaluate the possibility of setting a salary range standard for Job Coaches through the TESS program and with Employment Assistance Services providers. A jurisdictional review will be undertaken to look at how best to improve the provision of job coach/mentor supports and to help determine a possible salary range for Job Coaches.

Recommendation #20

Establish an active formal network of employment agencies serving persons with a disability to share knowledge and collaborate on training, promotion and addressing barriers faced by persons with a disability.

Completed

The NB EAS Network was formally created In October 2015, as an active network of service providers for persons with disability in New Brunswick. The NB EAS Network will assist and make recommendations to PETL on matters related to exploring efficiency, capacity and opportunities in the provision and delivery service for agencies serving persons with a disability.

Recommendation #21

In consultation with community partners, program participants and their families, undertake a comprehensive review of the Adult Development Activities, Programs and Training (ADAPT) program with the goal of building capacity within program agencies to facilitate community employment outcomes for people being served by the program. The review must include:

- a) *An update of program standards and standards of practice consistent with current evidence on best practices for supporting people to make the transition to paid employment in the community;*
- b) *The development and implementation of a training initiative for agencies and their staff on effective practices and strategies for transition to work planning, employment counselling and job coaching;*
- c) *A review of the requirements necessary for ADAPT program agencies to develop and submit TESS funding applications for the people they serve, and how these requirements will be addressed and met; and*
- d) *The development of a demonstration initiative with a small number of willing agencies to test the implementation of identified strategies and supports to assist people obtain paid employment in the community*

In Progress

The Departments of Social Development, and Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour have partnered with stakeholders to form a Steering Committee which is leading work on the ADAPT (Adult Development Activities, Programs, and Training) Access to Employment Project. Stakeholder members include the Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons, the New Brunswick Association for Community Living, the New Brunswick Association for Supported Services, and Key Industries.

The goal of this project is to develop, test and evaluate a change process and a service delivery model for ADAPT agencies that will include, as a key component, features that lead to greater community employment outcomes for real wages for adults served by agencies, including adults with an intellectual disability.

Recommendation #22

Review and reform the Training and Employment Support Services (TESS) Program and guidelines with a particular focus on:

- a) *Through a phasing in process, increasing the hours of support available from the current maximum of 600 hours over 52 weeks to a minimum of 1200 hours over 52 weeks within 4 years;*
- b) *Providing enhanced training for TESS Coordinators on:*
 - *The potential of persons with a disability to work and help address current and future labour market needs;*
 - *The types of supports by persons with a disability to successfully move to sustainable long term employment;*
 - *The supports need by persons with a disability to participate in post- secondary education and training, and why the supports are necessary; and*
 - *How to review and interpret documentation, including assessments.*
- c) *Providing access to support funding for more than one degree program;*
- d) *Providing access to support funding when an individual changes jobs and requires support to be successful in the new job;*
- e) *Providing access to support funding for required continuing education or accreditation maintenance when funding for disability supports is not provided by the employer or if a person’s disability requires new or additional supports (e.g., technical aids);*
- f) *Providing clear criteria and an application process for agencies supporting individuals with TESS applications; and*
- g) *Establishing a reasonable timeline for approving TESS funding applications (for example, 5 working days).*

Completed

Recommendation #23

Review and revise policies and criteria for the Disability Support Program so that adults under age 65 with more significant disabilities who require longer term disability-related supports for training and employment (e.g. an attendant or support worker) can apply for and receive funding for such supports after they have exhausted available TESS funding.

In Progress

Under the current policy for the Disability Support Program (DSP), services include personal supports within and outside the home. Stakeholders have been consulted on the possible expansion of these personal supports to include training and employment once an individual has reached the TESS funding limit.

Recommendation #24

Recruit, mentor and retain an additional six qualified interpreters so that the number of available qualified interpreters increases from six to twelve within three years. Additional interpreters must meet the requirements to provide services on behalf of the Departments of Social Development and Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour as well as employers.

In Progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is working with the Saint John Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Inc. and the South-East Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, on an initiative to develop and implement a mentorship program in New Brunswick for Interpreters for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The “NB Stages NB” Mentorship Program will help increase the number of qualified sign language interpreters in the province. The “NB Stages NB” Program is based on the framework of the American Sign Language - English interpretation.

The NB Stages NB Program is currently in the last phase of the project and the completion of Phase 4 will lead to the implementation of a fully sustainable interpreter mentorship program in NB by the end of 2018.

Recommendation #25

Adopt a ten-day approval standard for equipment and technical aid applications under the Health Services Program to ensure more timely disability-related supports for persons with a disability to transition to training and employment opportunities.

In Progress

A comprehensive review of the Health Services Program was completed by an external consultant and external stakeholders, suppliers, and service providers were consulted as part of this review. The analysis has shown that a target of 15 working days could be met for most non-urgent requests within the existing financial and human resource allocation for the program.

Recommendation #26

The Government of New Brunswick take concrete measures to increase the number and percentage of persons with a disability in the provincial public service by:

a) *Developing and enacting provincial employment equity legislation;*

Completed

b) *Establishing a provincial public service diversity and inclusion policy and a public service human resource recruitment strategy aimed at increasing the representation of persons with a disability; and*

Completed

The Department of Human Resources, in consultation with stakeholders, has developed a new Workplace Equity and Diversity Policy that includes persons with a disability. This policy establishes a common direction for the public service and the necessary framework to remove barriers to employment.

Changes to the GNB Staffing Policy Manual have been completed to support representation of the three target groups of the EEO Program, which includes persons with a disability.

- c) *Reforming the Equal Employment Opportunities Program to provide more effective support for facilitating participation of persons with a disability in the public service*

In Progress

The EEO program will continue to include its three current target groups, including persons with a disability. The Department is looking for ways to improve the EEO Program for GNB departments and agencies.

The Department of Human Resources and the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons have renewed their partnership and are exploring creative ways to ensure continued engagement with stakeholders.

The Department has recently entered into a federal/provincial agreement for persons with disabilities facilitated by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

The Department will be providing funding to hiring departments to purchase equipment to support persons with disabilities, if required.

Recommendation #27

Review and revise the New Brunswick Opportunities Network (NBON) bidding and tendering process with the goal of implementing requirements for bidders on provincial contracts to demonstrate a) How they currently include persons with a disability in their workforce; and b) What measures they will take to hire persons with a disability if they are a successful bidder.

Completed

Recommendation #28

Conduct a review of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service and develop a renewal plan for the service that will include:

- a) *An enhanced communications strategy to highlight the employability of persons with a disability and to recognize 'champion' employers;*
- b) *Enhanced awareness activities highlighting the services and supports available to employers; and*
- c) *Assistance to employers for determining and enhancing their capacity to be 'disability confident' employers (research models such as the U.K. Employers' Forum on Disability).*

Completed

PETL, through a consultant, reviewed the NBESS project in 2015. The report clearly illustrated the need for this service and demonstrated that NBESS has achieved the goals included in its agreement with PETL.

New Brunswick Employers Support Services (NBESS) has been operational for the past six years. The cornerstone of the service is promoting the hiring of persons with a disability.

The Advisory Committee of NBESS has decided not to pursue the model of the U.K Employers Forum on Disability in New Brunswick. The current service delivery model of NBESS is a better fit for the needs of New Brunswick employers.

Consultation, training, recruitment and linkages are the keys for success with this initiative. NBESS will also collaborate with the EAS Network to promote understanding and knowledge among employers on the advantages of hiring persons with a disability.

In addition, the “New Brunswick’s Leaders of Inclusion” campaign has been launched. NBESS and the EAS Network are collaborating with this provincial initiative which will recognize the “champion” employers who have hired persons with a disability.

Recommendation #29

Institute incentive measures for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability by:

- a) *Developing and implementing a provincial tax credit (similar to the U.S. Work Opportunity Tax Credit);*

In Progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will begin a jurisdictional review and conduct research to determine the feasibility of developing and implementing a provincial tax credit for private sector employers to hire persons with a disability. This analysis is expected to be completed in 2016.

- b) *Providing wage subsidies and supports for employers that participate in the proposed Intern Program for Persons with a disability (see Recommendation 9);*

In Progress

PETL will begin a jurisdictional review and conduct an analysis of the result to determine the feasibility of developing and implementing a provincial tax credit for private sector employers who hire persons with a disability. This analysis is expected to be completed in 2016. PETL continues to provide incentives to employers, such as enhanced wage subsidies, to hire persons with a disability, and continues to communicate with employers on an on-going basis about the programs and services available through the Department. This recommendation will be also addressed through Recommendation # 9 which is looking into the creation of an Intern Program for persons with a disability.

- c) *Providing ‘rebate grants’ to employers that hire persons with a disability to cover the cost of Mandatory Employment Related Costs; and*

In Progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour is examining the issue of ‘mandatory employment related costs’ to determine what additional supports can be provided to employers within existing funding structures. This is also part of the work being done to create an Intern program in Recommendation #9.

- d) *Developing an effective communication strategy to build awareness amongst employers of the incentives and to simplify the application process.*

In Progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour regularly reviews the effectiveness of the New Brunswick Employer Support Service (NBESS) in collaboration with key stakeholders. Since April 2015, PETL has collaborated with NBESS and the EAS Network to develop an effective communication strategy to build awareness of the benefits of hiring persons with a disability amongst employers.

Recommendation #30

Establish a self-employment development initiative for persons with a disability that will include:

- a) *A short-term research project on current Canadian and international best practices for supporting self-employment opportunities for persons with a disability;*

In Progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, in collaboration with key stakeholders, is interested in supporting a short-term research project on the current best practices for supporting self-employment opportunities for persons with a disability.

- b) *A review of ways in which the current network of enterprise agencies can support persons with a disability in developing and implementing self-employment options. This will include a requirement for training for Community Economic Development agencies (Enterprise Network) on the unique needs of persons with a disability;*
- c) *An investigation on how financial support can be provided to persons with a disability who are interested in self-employment, including the use of current programs such as Workforce Expansion;*

In Progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour continues to fund the Self-Employment Benefit program which provides financial support and mentoring to all eligible clients starting businesses, including persons with a disability. The Community Business Development Corporations deliver self-employment initiatives on behalf of the Department.

- d) *A review of current Social Assistance policies and how they may be improved to support persons with a disability who want to explore and undertake self-employment opportunities.*

In Progress

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour will continue to work with the Department to Social Development to develop a more seamless process to identify opportunities for common clients to access programs and services offered by PETL.

These two Departments have consulted with NBDEN and the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation to develop a high level preliminary design of a new service delivery model for persons with disability that will be presented for government consideration in the coming months.

Recommendation #31

Develop and implement a new communications plan to improve the visibility of the Premier's Council as a central information and referral resource for people seeking services and assistance with employment goals.

In Progress

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons is developing a communications plan to improve the visibility of the organization as a central information and resource center for persons with a disability as part of its strategic plan .

Recommendation #32

Hold a Premier's Forum on Employment for Persons with a disability with a particular focus on engaging employers in order to generate interest in hiring people and to promote awareness of and interest in the Employment Action Plan. Consideration should be given to holding a follow up forum every two years to review progress and renew interest and motivation for achieving employment outcomes for persons with a disability.

Completed

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons and the Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour organized the first Premier's Roundtable on Employment for Persons with a Disability in May 2014. An Opportunities Summit on Employment and Entrepreneurship for Persons with a Disability was jointly hosted by the PCSDP and the Jobs Board (Premier's Office) in December 2015. Additional related follow up activities are being planned for 2016.

Recommendation #33

Hold an annual provincial conference on employment for persons with a disability to share knowledge and best practices. The conference could be held in conjunction with another key event (e.g., enterprise support network event, Disability Awareness Week). The conference should be a learning opportunity for people who work within the education, training and employment sector who also support employment goals for persons with a disability. It should also have some capacity to bring in experts from the field from outside of New Brunswick.

Completed

Recommendation #34

- a) *Hold discussions between university representatives, government representatives and community stakeholders on creating interest and capacity with the New Brunswick academic and research community to conduct research on policy and best practices for employment of persons with a disability;*

Completed

- b) *Establish a research agenda and a plan for addressing the research needs identified.*

Completed

A research agenda and plan has been developed with a focus on New Brunswick data and priorities. The PCSDP is leading with the pursuit of this research agenda.

Recommendation #35

Establish baseline data, including record-keeping mechanisms, for all recommendations to allow for measurement of progress.

In Progress

The PCSDP is taking steps to establish baseline data on employment for persons with a disability in New Brunswick as a necessary step to improving the overall outcomes of the EAP.

Recommendation #36

An Employment Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring Group be established to oversee the on-going implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan. A chairperson must be designated for the implementation group and membership should include senior civil servants of lead Government Departments as well as appointed community partners, including representation from First Nations communities, and a private sector employer. The Group shall meet on a predetermined schedule and will be responsible for the following:

- *Establishing time frames for implementing the Action Plan recommendations and identifying first steps;*
- *Establishing committees/working groups identified in the Action Plan to undertake and implement specific recommendations;*
- *Overseeing research required by the Action Plan;*

- *Undertaking reviews of policies as needed to ensure compliance with the Action Plan recommendations;*
- *Overseeing the collection of data and other information to measure results consistent with the key indicators outlined in the Action Plan; and*
- *Providing progress updates to the Premier's.*

Completed

Recommendation #37

An annual report on the implementation of the Employment Action Plan, including information on the impact of the plan, be prepared and released publicly during Disability Awareness Week.

Completed

The PCSDP assumed leadership for completing the annual EAP Progress Report in April 2015.

Recommendation #38

An annual meeting between community partners, Ministers and deputy ministers of lead departments, and the Premier be held to discuss progress, issues and challenges.

Completed

The Premier's Office through the Jobs Board and the PCSDP jointly hosted the Opportunities Summit on Employment and Entrepreneurship for Persons with a Disability in December 2015 with an array of New Brunswick disability stakeholders.

Next Steps

In December 2015 the Premier's Council hosted an Opportunities Summit on employment for persons with a disability. This Summit included key disability stakeholders from around New Brunswick and it touched on most of the arguments, challenges, gaps, needs, costs, requirements, observations, and sector dynamics that are clearly evident whenever improving employment for persons with a disability is the topic of discussion in this province.

In looking at this issue, it has become evident that doing things the same way in the future as we always have most likely will leave us with the same outcomes, which we all agree need to somehow be improved for the many people we serve.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons believes it is possible and desirable to have an approach driven by New Brunswick data that takes an innovative market and partnership approach to increasing the number of jobs and better meeting the needs of both persons with a disability and their employers, while also adhering to our laws and to best practices.

The Premier's Council is taking steps now to find ways we can do this work better, to improve our collective strategic impact, and to support a more nimble focus on the needs of our clients as people and active citizens.

As a necessary step forward, the Premier's Council will enhance the level of engagement between the many disability stakeholders that must be involved in doing this work differently and more effectively in the future.

The Premier's Council will also work closely with the Premier's Office, various government departments, and key stakeholders on the renewal of the Employment Action Plan as the current version approaches its end on March 31, 2017.

It is our expectation that the government departments involved with the EAP will continue to show leadership and will continue with their significant efforts to act in a coordinated and complimentary way in their program decisions and the allocation of resources that specifically affect persons with a disability.

The Premier's Council will continue to follow up with each individual GNB Department to encourage and support progress on the recommendations of the current EAP and also will continue to report annually to the public on our progress with the implementation of the EAP.

Conclusion

The priority of the Government of New Brunswick is job creation and GNB is working with the private sector and others to create jobs and grow the economy. This is a necessary step as together we all work to make New Brunswick the best place to live, work and raise a family.

Over many years, NB has undertaken numerous strategies and plans aimed at improving employment for persons with a disability.

While progress has been made through a wide array of community or government programs, and the investment of substantial amounts of money, more still needs to be done to improve employment for persons with a disability in NB. Far too many people with a disability are still unable to find a real job with real wages in New Brunswick.

Disability issues are complex, touching the lives of nearly each of us as consumers, through family members, or via friends.

Effective solutions require coordination, collaboration, and trust between stakeholders along with ongoing engagement between government decision makers and those of us with a disability that are affected by the decisions taken by government and others.

Working together, we can build a province that prospers by ensuring true inclusion for each of us!