

# EPISODIC DISABILITIES NETWORK

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### **Episodic Disabilities Network Convenes Forum & Policy Dialogue on Workforce Participation by People Living with Episodic Disabilities in Canada**

#### **Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work**

Toronto, May 2, 2013 – On April 17<sup>th</sup> the Episodic Disabilities Network (EDN) convened a policy dialogue in Ottawa. The goal was to develop a strategy to help the millions of Canadians living with episodic disabilities to fully and productively participate in the workforce.

#### **Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation**

Members of the government of Canada joined policy-makers, employers, organized labour, and people living with an episodic disability to identify achievable solutions to the barriers that prevent full workforce participation by people living with episodic disabilities.

#### **DisAbled Women’s Network Canada**

Millions of Canadians live with lifelong conditions that can result in episodes of disability and that number is growing steadily. Advances in medicine have enabled people with conditions such as arthritis, Crohn's disease, diabetes, hepatitis C, HIV, mental illness, multiple sclerosis and some forms of cancer to live full and productive lives – most of the time. Despite the best medical treatments, many of these people will experience unpredictable and fluctuating periods of disability, which negatively impacts their ability to participate in the workforce and family life.

#### **Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada**

In his opening remarks Member of Parliament for Brant, MP Phil McColeman said that the Government of Canada is “... working hard to create jobs and build a strong economy in these uncertain global economic times” and that “one of the major challenges the government is working to address is the impending labour shortage that some predict could lead to as many as one million unfilled jobs by the end of the decade.” He added further that this was one of the reasons why the government’s 2013 budget included measures aimed at promoting skills training, apprenticeship and connecting Canadians with available jobs. “But Budget 2013 does go further”, MP McColeman continued, “in identifying key untapped pools of talented people who are underrepresented in the labour force and that includes Canadians living with disabilities.”

#### **The Arthritis Society**

MP McColeman also informed the participants about the Private Member’s Motion M-430, *Strengthening Employment for Canadians with Disabilities*, which he recently introduced. The comprehensive Motion, calls on the Government to endorse the recent Report from the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for People with Disabilities, “Re-Thinking disAbility in the Private Sector”, and encourages further steps that will build on the Panel’s findings to encourage employment opportunities for Canadians with disabilities.

Member of Parliament for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Bernard Trottier, delivered the keynote address. He stated, “I’m pleased to work with the Government of Canada to ensure that Canadians from all walks of life, including those with disabilities and work challenges, can contribute to our society to their full potential.” MP Trottier continued by saying, “I salute the

constructive approach taken by the Episodic Disabilities Network to engage stakeholders dealing with the challenges posed for those with episodic disabilities in Canada.” He ended by asking the rhetorical question, “How can we get results for people living with episodic disabilities, in particular in the area of Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits, if we do not have the most basic data on the issue?” MP Trottier then strongly encouraged the EDN to provide the government with the data, so that the government would be in a position to further consider, in an evidence-informed way, the EDN recommendations on EI.

The strategy and action plan that will emanate from this policy dialogue will address some of the barriers and propose strategies to full workforce participation by people living with episodic disabilities.

#### About the Episodic Disabilities Network

The Episodic Disabilities Network (EDN), formed in 2003, brings together a range of key stakeholders from across Canada who have a shared interest in episodic disabilities, with a collective mandate to advance federal policy, programs, legislation and regulations as required, allowing Canadians living with an episodic disability to engage fully in the workplace and to remove barriers to income support programs created by the episodic disability.

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