

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

**Making
accommodations
for persons with
disabilities:
creating win-win
opportunities for
success at the
workplace**



Canadian Apprenticeship Forum
Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage

www.caf-fca.org



HERE'S WHAT EMPLOYERS SAID

Create special programs for employers in the skilled trades

- Construction firms could be invited to work on projects in government buildings while employing apprentices with disabilities. Tight timelines would be removed from the project bid so that journeypersons working with the apprentices would have the time to make the appropriate accommodations. Learning opportunities for the apprentices could be maximized in this environment.
- Employers in residential construction could hire persons with disabilities as consultants on home accessibility. This measure would help employers tap into a growing market of potential customers. The government could, in turn, subsidize homebuilders to carry out the construction with participation from apprentices with disabilities.

THE CANADIAN APPRENTICESHIP FORUM/ FORUM CANADIEN SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE (CAF-FCA) INVITED EMPLOYERS, JOURNEYPersons, AND APPRENTICES, TO SHARE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE SKILLED TRADES.

Discuss with employers' their roles and responsibilities

- Employers stated that their company's safety record is vital to their reputation. Employers who had never hired apprentices with disabilities had many concerns about health and safety. Through a short presentation, the Ministry of Labour could clarify the rules and regulations around hiring persons with disabilities and making workplace accommodations in the skilled trades environment.

Support employers through advice and incentives

- Employers want accommodation advice applicable to specific trades. The Closing the Gap survey with employers in the manufacturing and service industries supports this finding. Eighty-six per cent said more information on accommodation would be highly valuable and 78% said they would like expert advice on accommodation.
- Tax incentives, streamlining paperwork, and wage subsidies were additional incentives mentioned.

Help apprentices sell themselves to employers

- When talking to employers, apprentices need to be able to promote their skills and dispel myths regarding their disabilities.



HERE'S WHAT APPRENTICES SAID

Create awareness about the supports available

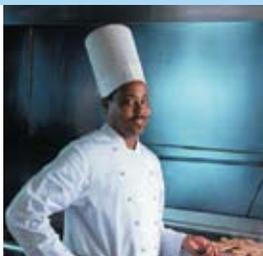
- Apprenticeship stakeholders should continue to work together to ensure that apprentices with disabilities have access to a full range of supports to succeed in their apprenticeship programs.
- Dispelling fears about technical training and informing persons with disabilities about how they can be helped is important to encouraging potential apprentices to enter the trades.
- Apprentices need to be informed about what is required in terms of accommodation so they can plan ahead and make the appropriate arrangements.
- Networking and information sharing opportunities involving technical training stakeholders would be valuable in order to educate employers about the resources available for apprentices with disabilities.

Develop a mentoring program for persons with disabilities in the skilled trades

- Apprentices noted it would be helpful if there was a way to connect with other persons with disabilities in their trade to share tips, advice, and experiences.

Use tutors and readers that have trades experience

- Tutors and readers with experience in the trades would be helpful, according to apprentices, because they could provide more practical examples and would pronounce trade specific terms accurately. Retired journeypersons could be an effective pool of tutors because they have knowledge and experience. Such a program could be piloted and evaluated to determine its impact.



ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Dispel myths through trades-specific research

- *Are persons with disabilities in the skilled trades just as productive and safe as other workers?* Research by the Australian Safety and Compensation Council and the OECD shows that, in fact, persons with disabilities have reduced numbers of occupational health and safety incidents, lower workers' compensation costs, lower absenteeism and higher retention rates. This study focused on a variety of occupations, not just the trades. Future research could examine whether or not these findings are applicable to the skilled trades environment in Canada.
- *What is the return on training investment for hiring a person with a disability in the skilled trades or making accommodations?* Data that is specifically based on employers in the skilled trades may challenge some employers' assumptions that hiring a person with a disability or making accommodations is costly to their business.
- *What is the business case for learning supports?* Creating a business case for learning supports could help ensure apprentices with disabilities continue to have access to the supports they need to be successful.
- *To what extent do pre-apprenticeship programs assist in attracting and retaining persons with disabilities into apprenticeship?* More information is needed on what programs are available for particular trades and who is using them.

Encourage Partnerships

- Strong partnerships between training organizations, disability organizations, and employers are essential to successfully recruiting and placing persons with disabilities in training opportunities.

CAF-FCA'S 2008 research included a literature review and an environmental scan. Interviews/focus groups were also conducted with 66 mostly small business employers, 14 apprentices, four journeypersons, and five service or support organizations. Participants worked in industrial/road/residential construction, automotive, and manufacturing including steel fabrication, machining, and tool and die. Trade occupations included plumbers, machinists, mechanics, electricians, millwrights, welders, heavy duty technicians, carpenters, sheet metal workers, gas fitters, and HVAC. Participants were from Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Alberta, and Quebec.



**The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum-
Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage**
116 Albert Street, Suite 812
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G3
Tel: (613) 235-4004
Fax: (613) 235-712
info@caf-fca.org
WWW.CAF-FCA.ORG

Canada

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