

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS
ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
2ND FLOOR BOARDROOM, NORQUAY BUILDING, 401 YORK**

PRESENT: Yvonne Peters (Chair), Lanny McInnes (Vice-Chair), Jim Derksen, Jim Baker, Scott Jocelyn, Ralph Groening, Judy Redmond, Jesse Turner, Dave Schellenberg, Doug Momotiuk

REGRETS: None

Introductions were made, including the two new members of the Council, Ralph Groening of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and Jesse Turner of the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities.

The Secretary of the Council updated the group on the status of Customer Service Standard. The new Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, Kerri Irvin-Ross accepted the recommendations and provided instructions to the Proposed Customer Service Standard. The Secretary has met with Legislative Counsel, who are responsible for drafting the Proposed Standard, as well as Aaron Berg from Civil Legal Services, to offer his human rights perspective. It is expected the Proposed Customer Service Standard will be posted on the Disabilities Issues Office website in February. At that point, the public would have another 60 days to provide their feedback. Following this period, the Council, in consultation with the Minister, will consider all comments received, and if appropriate, suggest amendment(s) before finalizing and forwarding to cabinet for approval.

The Chair reiterates that employment has been identified by the Minister as the next area of standard development. She says the scope of the Ontario employment standard is, to a large extent, existing accommodation practices found within *The Employment Standards Act* and the Human Rights Code. She asks the Council for suggestions of how to make a meaningful employment standard for persons with disabilities, while at the same recognizing the limitations of what can be contained in an “employment” standard. There will be the establishment of a new committee tasked with the development of the standard, but the Council needs to develop the terms of reference with clear instructions to the standard development committee.

One member cautions the Council of what our mandate is and how far the Council can go in the development of an employment standard. We should not be trying to squeeze into a standard what really doesn't fit. Instead, we acknowledge our limitations but offer recommendations for a complementary approach beyond existing best practices. For instance, the Premier's Advisory Council on Workplace Development already has a mandate to promote workplace inclusion. What programmatic initiatives is it recommending and what other programs are the government currently involved in that are geared towards improving the opportunities for persons with disabilities finding employment?

Action: DIO prepare a document of the various government programmatic employment initiatives for persons with disabilities and share with the Council in advance of the next meeting.

The Chair reflected on the decades of initiatives and approaches to promoting employment inclusion, whether affirmative action, employment equity or duty to accommodate. There has been progress, but persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to get in the door and stay. There are additional challenges for particular segments of persons with disabilities, who may not possess the abilities required to multi-task or be computer literate, indispensable attributes in today's competitive work environment..

One member agrees employment engagement of persons with disabilities is complex in terms of the number of players and initiatives. Going back to the legislation and our intention to compliment the Human Rights Code, the focus should be on eliminating all potential barriers that may exist for persons with disabilities seeking employment. For example, when recruiting an employee, employers must be aware of how to create a barrier-free process and that any discussion regarding workplace accommodations must occur after a position has been offered.

One member of the Council's peer in Ontario says there seems to be a disconnect between the employer who has done his due diligence in following the AODA employment standard, yet still being prone to a human rights complaint. The chair suggested that if we build on human rights principles it will certainly help to prevent a complaint, and will show that the employer has done due diligence. At the same time, it does not completely alleviate a complaint.

Several members asked how people will be chosen to be on the employment standard development committee. Yvonne responded that the Council will determine the membership, with a good balance of expertise and stakeholder representation. Yvonne plans to discuss this membership and the focus for their terms of reference at the next meeting.

Action: John will do a doodle poll for a meeting to take place in the next 3 weeks. It will be scheduled for three hours.