# **Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA)** Symposium Programme

**Version: September 22, 2025**

**Date:** Monday, October 6th and Tuesday, October 7th, 2025  
**Location:** Schwartz Reisman Innovation Campus at the University of Toronto and virtually online

**Registration Link**: [https://www.vraie-idea.ca/idea-symposium](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Flinkprotect.cudasvc.com%2Furl%3Fa%3Dhttps%253a%252f%252fwww.vraie-idea.ca%252fidea-symposium%26c%3DE%2C1%2CrPyHPzc2sl_GHT5b6sYc_scfG8tAB540ov28lhNbNdEw54A0vb5RaxsGFB9C3l5UyxDTjMEaQXHvR6TRa-2qWzEGwO6x4AwI3BYLDyF48OCp%26typo%3D1&data=05%7C02%7Cetompa%40iwh.on.ca%7Ca837eb84b37b4be4dfe008dde0d3090b%7C5abd300854324a4ab0afc41f11e6527b%7C0%7C0%7C638913919222038198%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=pudJGKaHZx2cjhhXqMwcCZ0gsv0FluXUEBRN8ja6txg%3D&reserved=0)

#### **Day 1**

**Masters of Ceremonies**

* **Alec Farquhar**, IDEA Strategic Advisor
* **Sinead McCarthy**, Vice President, Development, Programs and Human Resources, Youth Employment Services; IDEA Hub Co-lead for Transitions to Work and Career Development

| **Time** | **Session** |
| --- | --- |
| 9:00 – 9:15 AM | **Registration and Continental Breakfast** |
| 9:15 – 9:30 AM | **Welcoming Remarks**  **Masters of Ceremony**  **Krista Carr**, IDEA Advisory Committee Chair; Chief Executive Officer, Inclusion Canada  **Emile Tompa**, IDEA Executive Director; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health  **Rebecca Gewurtz**, IDEA Director; Associate Professor, McMaster University |
| 9:30 – 9:45 AM | **Morning Remarks**  **Melissa Fishman**, Educator and Community Collaborator, 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations |
| 9:45 – 10:30 AM | **Opening Keynote**  Topic: Inclusive employment practices – Supporting employers on their inclusion journey  **Susanne Bruyere**, Academic Director, Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, Cornell University |
| 10:30 – 11:30 AM | **Panel Session**  Implementation of inclusive employment practices as tools to support employer journeys  **Moderator:** **Emile Tompa**, Executive Director, IDEA  **Andrew Dixon,** Research Associate, IDEA  **Peter Field**, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant  **Matt Freeman**, Assistant Clinical Professor, McMaster University  **Rebecca Gewurtz**, Director, IDEA  **Andy Livingston**, Chief Executive Officer, Dexterity Consulting  **Mahadeo Sukhai**, Chief Operating Officer, IDEA-STEM |
| 11:30 – 11:45 AM | **Break** |
| 11:45 – 12:30 PM | **Lightning Talks**  IDEA applied work – Tools and resources from IDEA’s Incubator Hubs |
| 12:30 – 1:30 PM | **Lunch** |
| 1:30 – 2:00 PM | **Afternoon Keynote Address**  **Alec Farquhar**, IDEA Strategic Advisor |
| 2:00 – 3:00 PM | **Panel Session**  Improving the Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of Employees with Disabilities in the Public Service of Canada  **Moderator:** **Alfred MacLeod,** Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Service Accessibility, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Government of Canada  **Nadine Charron**, Executive Director, Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology (AAACT) Program, Shared Services Canada  **André Baril**, Director General, Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Projects, Employment and Social Development Canada  **Angela Wellman**, Chief of Staff/Senior Advisor, Office of Public Service Accessibility, Treasury Board Secretariat  **Ashvene Sureshkumar**, Research Associate, IDEA |
| 3:00 – 3:05 PM | **Masters of Ceremony explain breakout room setup** |
| 3:05 – 3:20 PM  3:20 – 3:30 PM | **Break**  **Transition to Breakout Rooms** |
| 3:30 – 4:30 PM | **IDEA Incubator Hub Workshops (In-person only)** |
| 4:30 – 4:40 PM | **Transition to Main Room** |
| 4:40 – 5:00 PM | **Closing Keynote**  **Mayor Mike Bradley,** City ofSarnia, Ontario |
| 5:00 – 5:15 PM | **Day 1 Closing Reflections/Announcements**  **Masters of Ceremony**  **Emile Tompa**, IDEA Executive Director; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health  **Rebecca Gewurtz**, IDEA Director; Associate Professor, McMaster University |
| 5:20 – 6:30 PM | **Reception** |

#### **Day 2**

**Masters of Ceremony**

* **Wendy Cukier**, Director, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University; IDEA Advisory Committee Member
* **Peter Field**, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant

| **Time** | **Session** |
| --- | --- |
| 9:00 – 9:15 AM | **Registration and Continental Breakfast** |
| 9:15 – 9:35 AM | **Welcoming Remarks**  **Masters of Ceremony**  **Karen Harlos,** Professor, Department of Business, University of Winnipeg |
| 9:35 – 10:05 AM | **Opening Keynote Address**  **Bilan Arte,** National Representative, Human Rights Department, Canadian Labour Congress; IDEA Advisory Committee Member |
| 10:05 – 11:00 AM | **Panel Session**  Transforming Workplace Systems to Build Sustainable Capacity for Inclusion of Diverse Youth  **Moderator: Rafael Gomez**; Director, CIRHR, University of Toronto; Initiative Co-lead  **Andrew Dixon**, Research Associate, IDEA  **Brian Foster**, National Program Manager, Policy & Resource Development, Ready Willing and Able (RWA), Inclusion Canada  **Jonathan Lai**, Executive Director, Autism Alliance of Canada  **Sinead McCarthy**, Vice President, Youth Employment Services (YES)  **Emile Tompa**, Executive Director, IDEA; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health |
| 11:00 – 11:15 AM | **Break** |
| 11:15 AM – 1:00 PM | **Partner Lightning Talks**  ***Diversity Institute***  **Wendy Cukier**, Director, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University  ***March of Dimes Canada***  **Charlotte** **Buttle**, Research and Evaluation Associate, March of Dimes Canada  **Hedgerow Thompson,** Lived-experienceProject Committee Member  ***LiveWorkPlay***  **Rebecca Coxon**, Team Lead for Employment Ontario and the Interim Volunteer Manager, LiveWorkPlay  **Anna Nelson**, Director of Employment Supports, LiveWorkPlay  ***Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital* Laura Bowman**, Project Manager, Research and Evaluation, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital  **Carolyn McDougall**, Manager, Employment Pathways and Ontario/Canada coordinator-Project SEARCH, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital  ***Youth Employment Services (YES)***  **Gabriella Evans**, Regional Manager, WorkAbility, Youth Employment Services (YES)  ***Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)***  **Bridgette Sterling,** Disability Employment Inclusion Specialist, ODEN  ***CASE/MentorAbility***  **Joanna Goode**, Executive Director**,** Canadian Association for Supported Employment  **Mary Beshai**, Director - MentorAbility Canada,  Canadian Association for Supported Employment |
| 1:00 – 2:00 PM | **Lunch** |
| 2:00 – 3:00 PM | **Table Talks**  Brainstorming the Next Generation of Activities |
| 3:00 – 3:15 PM | **Break** |
| 3:15 – 3:45 PM | **Closing Keynote**  **Agnes McLachlan,** Manager - Global Well-being, TELUS |
| 3:45 – 4:00 PM | **Symposium Closing Reflections and Remarks**  **Masters of Ceremony**  **Emile Tompa**, IDEA Executive Director; Senior Scientist, Institute for Work & Health  **Rebecca Gewurtz**, IDEA Director; Associate Professor, McMaster University |
| 4:00– 5:00 PM | **Networking and Speed Mentorship** |

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