



Disability and Work in Canada 2025

Westin Ottawa

Driving Economic Success: The Impact of Disability Inclusion in the Canadian Workplace

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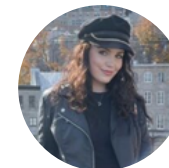
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ROSIE SMITH

Program Assistant (Executive Office),
Realize

Day 1: December 1st, 2025

	Confederation 1 & 2		
8:00-9:00	Registration & Full Breakfast		
9:00 - 9:20	Welcoming Remarks <i>Ingrid Palmer, Realize</i> <i>Heather Walkus, Council of Canadians with Disabilities</i>		
9:20 - 9:30	Opening Remarks <i>The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario</i>		
9:30-9:55	Canada's National and International Commitments to Inclusive Employment <i>Bob Rae, Former Ambassador of Canada to the United Nations</i>		
9:55 - 10:00	Transition Break		
	Confederation 1 & 2	Confederation 3	Provinces
10:00 -10:30	Beyond Compliance: Building Accessibility Cultures in the Workplace <i>Christopher T. Sutton, Canadian Human Rights Commission</i>	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Workers Matter: Inclusive Employment that Works <i>Connie Russell, Silent Voice Canada</i> <i>Mahsa Tahzibi, Silent Voice Canada</i> <i>Mihret Tekle, Silent Voice Canada</i>	WorkAbility: Pathways to Inclusive Employment <i>Angeli Mehrotra, University of Guelph</i>
10:30 -11:00	Break		
11:00 - 12:00	Excellence in Advocacy: Workers with Disabilities and the Union Advantage <i>Lily Chang, Canadian Labour Congress</i> <i>Elizabeth Kwan, Canadian Labour Congress</i> <i>Angelo Tocco, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association</i> <i>Andy LaDouceur, United Steel Workers Union</i> <i>Arlene Phillips, Ontario Public Service Employees Union</i>	Inclusive Employment Accountability: Hiring Matters! <i>Anna Nelson, LiveWorkPlay</i> <i>Keenan Wellar, LiveWorkPlay</i> <i>Mary Gusella, LiveWorkPlay</i> <i>Douglas McConnachie, Innovation Science and Economic Development</i> <i>Frank Fagan, Ready Willing and Able</i>	Updating the Pan-Canadian Strategy for Disability and Work <i>DWC Steering Committee</i>

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	Confederation 1 & 2	Confederation 3	Provinces
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch		
1:00 - 1:55	The Value of Investing in the Untapped Talent of Youth with Disabilities • Jeffrey Normore, CCRW • Sheri Little, CCRW • Vanessa Sinclair, CCRW	<u>Lightning Talks</u> 1) Between the Lines: Quick Takes, Trends, and Things We Don't Talk About • Tammy Morris, EY Canada 2) Stepping Forward: Balance Pre-Employment Program in Action • Elizabeth Mohler, BALANCE for Blind Adults 3) Autism in the Workplace • Karina Gaudier, Autism Workforce Solutions	Futuring Disability Employment Inclusion (Workshop) • Arif Jetha, Institute for Work & Health • Meghan Crouch, Institute for Work & Health <u>Scan QR code for Pre Read Material:</u>  
1:55 - 2:00	Transition Break		
2:00 - 2:30	Measuring Impact Beyond the Workshop • Melissa Egan, Realize • Sunny Wang, Realize	Disability Disclosure in Canadian Workplaces • Lindsay Coffin, Conference Board of Canada • Joanna Goode, Canadian Association for Supported Employment • Mary Beshai, MentorAbility Canada	Opportunities and Challenges of Mental Health Inclusion Policies and Practices Among Rural Canadian SMEs • Mayme Lefurgey Community Business Development Corporation Restigouche • Patrick Wray, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
2:30 - 3:00	Coffee Break		

Day 1: December 1st, 2025

	Confederation 1 & 2	Confederation 3	Provinces
3:00 - 3:55	AI and Inclusive Hiring: Exploring the Opportunities and Risks • Sinthea Chowdhury, Inclusion Canada • Lisa Liskovoi, OCAD University • Brian Foster, Ready, Willing & Able	Engaging Employees with Disabilities Successfully from Day One • Alec Farquhar, IDEA • Alfred MacLeod, Assistant Deputy Minister • Emile Tompa, IDEA • Nadine Charron, Shared Services	Collaborating for Disability-Inclusive Workforces • Laura Bowman, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital • Carolyn McDougall, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital • Lori Riding, Halton Healthcare • Dolly Menna-Dack, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital • Jennifer Way, March of Dimes Canada • Jennifer Ridley, Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)
3:55- 4:00	Transition Break		
4:00 -4:30	Workplace psychological safety for all: Incorporating a disability-lens • Lina Lopez, CSA Group • Andréane Chénier, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)	Youth Striving to Accelerate Results (YStar) • Ayomide (Joy) Adebayo-Oyetoro, Eviance • Olivia Boonstra, Eviance • Nicole Collier, Eviance	Igniting Innovation Through Inclusive R&D: Lessons from the Field • Virginie Cobigo, Open Accessibility. • Dominic Couture, Open Accessibility • Tanya McLeod, Sinneave Foundation • Radha MacCulloch, Specialisterne Canada
5:00 - 8:00	Reception Room TwentyTwo		

Scan QR code for Speaker Bios



Day 2: December 2nd, 2025

8:00 - 9:00	Full Breakfast		
9:00 - 9:30	Welcome Back Day 2 <i>Ingrid Palmer, Realize Canada</i> <i>Heather Walkus, Council of Canadians with Disabilities</i>		
9:30 - 9:55	Lived Experience Perspective on the Workplace <i>Ben Akuoke</i> <i>Nkem Ovbonna, Ase Community Foundation</i> <i>Paula McDonald</i>		
9:55 - 10:00	Transition Break		
	Confederation 1 & 2	Confederation 3	Provinces
10:00 - 10:30	Guide to a barrier-free workplace (Accessibility Standards Canada's Centre of Expertise) <i>Dino Zuppa, Accessibility Standards Canada</i> <i>Maureen Haan, CCRW</i>	Fairness and Employment in STEM <i>Claudia Sendanyoye, IDEA-STEM</i> <i>Mahadeo Sukhai, IDEA STEM</i>	Kindness and Inclusion to Foster Engagement <i>LN Saint-Jacques, UQÀM</i>
10:30 - 11:00	Break		
11:00 - 12:00	Workplace Inclusion Metrics, Economic Output <i>Eve Adams, Canadian Business Disability Inclusion Network</i> <i>Emily Candy Talent Advisory – BLG</i> <i>Tony LaBillois -Retired Director General Stats Canada, Accessibility Advocate</i> <i>Jamie Burton, INNOVA</i>	Neuroinclusive Employment: Intention to Action <i>Naomi Fraser, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation</i> <i>Tanya McLeod, Sinneave Foundation</i> <i>Aaron Baer, Renno & Co</i> <i>Shawn de Raaf, SRDC</i>	Entrepreneurship for Inclusion: Lessons from Lived Experience <i>Beth Hutchison, Deaf Interpreting & ASL Consulting</i> <i>Emma Brown, Whimble</i> <i>Lucille Berlinguette-Saumure, LBSAccessibility</i> <i>Zoey Schvan, Spoonie Table</i>

Day 2: December 2nd, 2025

	Confederation 1 & 2	Confederation 3	Provinces
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch		
1:00 - 1:55	Disability Inclusion: An Economic Imperative for Business - Jennefer Griffith, Food Processing Skills Canada - Jasmine Qi, Tourism HR Canada - Mark Chapeskie, EHRC - Rob Henderson, Bio Talent	<u>Lightning Talks</u> 1) Informing Inclusive Park Workplaces - Hannah Dudney, University of Toronto 2) Lessons Learned from Accessibility Implementation - Mandi Crespo, BDO Canada 3) A Safe Return to Work - Anna Zhyn, Prevention Link - Francis Pineda, Prevention Link	Workplace Disclosures & Mental Health - Emmanuelle Lopez-Bastos, UFCW - Jennifer Brown, UFCW - Marv Funk, UFCW - Mathilde Lefebvre, CFACQ
1:55- 2:00	Transition Break		
2:00- 2:30	Exploring Motivations Behind Sustainable Disability Inclusive Hiring - Emily Escoffery, Wilfrid Laurier University - Vanessa Sinclair, CCRW	Building Accessibility Through Clean Air Rohini Peris, Environmental Health Association of Canada	The Race to the Starting Line – What You Need to Know About the Accessible Canada Act for Making a Barrier-Free Society Max Brault, Accessibility and Disability Advocacy
2:30 - 3:00	Coffee Break		
	Confederation 1 & 2		
3:00 - 4:00	From Compliance to Capacity Building: Funding, Measurement, and Cultural Shifts in Building Inclusive Economies - Mayor Andrew Sloan – Central Elgin - Emma Lui, CUPE - Speaker, TBD		
4:00 - 4:30	Closing Remarks - Ingrid Palmer, Realize Canada - Heather Walkus, Council of Canadians with Disabilities		

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Rick Hansen
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