

Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement  
for Persons with Disabilities  
Annual Report 2007-08

December 3, 2008

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## **Ministers' Message**

On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia we are pleased to present the Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Annual Report 2007-08. The Annual Report is a means to inform Nova Scotians of the effectiveness of the programs and services targeted to helping persons with disabilities participate in the labour force.

We recognize that persons with disabilities have unique, diverse and sometimes complex needs. Families, governments, stakeholder groups and service providers in Nova Scotia believe in the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in our community. We try to help persons with disabilities meet their full potential everyday. Government sponsored labour market programs for persons with disabilities are intended to address the additional employment, education and training challenges that disabilities may create for people.

In December 2003, the provincial and territorial governments and the Government of Canada endorsed the Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities. In April 2004 the Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia signed the Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. The Canada-Nova Scotia agreement provides an opportunity for our governments to work together to improve labour market conditions for people with disabilities in our province.

In Nova Scotia, the departments of Community Services, Education, Health, and Health Promotion and Protection work together to offer programs and services that enhance the employability of persons with disabilities, such as career counseling, campus-based supports, addiction treatment and mental health services. The program and supports provided under these agreements have made and continue to make a profound difference in the lives of Nova Scotians with disabilities.

The Nova Scotia government is committed to working together with the disability community, the Government of Canada and other partners to continue offering services that meet the current and future needs of Nova Scotians with disabilities.

Judy Streach  
Minister of Community Services

Chris d'Entremont  
Minister of Health

Barry Barnet  
Minister of Health Promotion and Protection

Karen Casey  
Minister of Education

## **Introduction**

Governments recognize that persons with disabilities value employment and want, and are able, to make an important contribution to Nova Scotian society. Consequently, governments have offered many programs over the years to help persons with disabilities find meaningful work. The province of Nova Scotia has partnered with the Government of Canada for more than 45 years delivering cost-shared programs to assist persons with disabilities making the transition to the labour force. This partnership began with the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Agreement in 1962. In April 1998 the Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Agreement was introduced, then subsequently replaced in 2003-04 with the current Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities Agreement. The Multilateral Agreement provides the basis for bilateral agreements between individual provinces and the Government of Canada. The current agreement has been extended on an annual basis since March 2006. Nova Scotia is hopeful this partnership with the Government of Canada will continue beyond the end of the current extension of the agreement in March 2009.

Nova Scotia is proud of the achievements made through this partnered, cost-shared agreement. It has provided the means to help thousands of Nova Scotians with disabilities into the labour force where they enjoy the same rights, privileges and opportunities as any employed Canadian.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement for Persons with Disabilities provides joint funding for programs and supports for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia made a commitment to release an annual public report about the programs and services funded under the agreement. This is the fourth edition of the annual report and follows last year's Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Report 2006-07. It describes the variety of programs and services funded under this agreement. The report includes program objectives, descriptions, target populations and cost-shared expenditures for the Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities for the 2007-08 fiscal period.

## Background

In November 2002, Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services approved a process to guide the negotiation of a successor agreement to the Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) agreement. The Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD) was approved on December 5, 2003 and became effective on April 1, 2004. Subsequently Canada and Nova Scotia signed a bilateral agreement regarding the transfer of federal money to Nova Scotia to support programs and services identified as eligible for cost-shared funding under the multilateral and bilateral agreements.

The goal of the LMAPD agreement is to improve the employment situation for people with disabilities. The Agreement attempts to meet this goal by:

- enhancing the employability of persons with disabilities
- increasing the employment opportunities available to them
- building on the existing knowledge base

The 2004-05 federal budget announced an additional \$30 million for the LMAPD initiative. As a result of the additional funding, Nova Scotia received an increase of \$845,128 in funding (based on a per capita funding formula), bringing the total amount of federal recoveries to approximately \$8.3 million per year. The additional monies support LMAPD programs and services within Nova Scotia. The Province's annual investment in the program exceeds the cost-matching requirements for these federal funds with spending targeted toward employability and disability supports for Nova Scotians.

The Province of Nova Scotia offers a wide range of programs and services to support people with disabilities. These programs and services are delivered by the Department of Community Services, Department of Education, Department of Health, and Department of Health Promotion and Protection. This report describes the programs and services offered during the 2007-08 fiscal period, and provides statistical data and expenditures for the same period.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Baseline Report 2004 - 05 was publicly released on December 3, 2004. Subsequent annual reports have been released each year on or about December 3, the International Day of the Disabled Person. This report builds on the previous annual reports, and fulfills Nova Scotia's commitment to report annually on activities under the LMAPD agreement.

## **Programs and Services**

### **Department of Community Services**

Operating under the Canada/Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities, the primary objective of the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPWD) program offered by the Department of Community Services is to enhance the employability of people with disabilities. This is achieved through the provision of employment related services and supports that lead to full or part time employment in the competitive labour market.

To be eligible for LMAPWD services provided by the Department of Community Services, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- be disabled to the extent that they are unable, at the time of requesting services, to seek any meaningful job because of a physical or mental disability, and there is a realistic possibility of benefiting from LMAPWD services; or
- the disability makes it difficult to complete the work requirements of the job; or
- the disability makes it difficult to undertake training which would lead to employment; and
- be at least 16 years of age; and
- not participating in the public school system at the time of requesting services; and
- be a Canadian citizen or a landed immigrant who is a resident of Nova Scotia; and
- must not be applying for the reimbursement of a good or service acquired prior to being approved both under the LMAPWD program and/or (in the case of a vocational crisis request) approved for that good or service;

Applicants are considered ineligible under the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Program if they:

- have a claim under the Workers' Compensation Act, Canadian Veteran's Rehabilitation Act, or through private insurance companies; or
- are eligible for services through Service Canada or CPP; or
- are currently receiving active medical/psychiatric treatment which would interfere with the rehabilitation process; or
- are currently under the jurisdiction of the provincial education (public school) system.

Employment Counselors work with eligible individuals to ensure they have access to the following services which are available through the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities Program:

- Information and direct referral - access to information and referral to support agencies;

- Assessment - access to vocational assessments, career assessments, academic assessments, etc;
- Employment and Career Counselling - access to employment support services and career counselling support;
- Skills and educational supports - access to upgrading and short term training programs;
- Provision of required technical aids - funding is provided for the purchase of eligible technical aids;
- Job Coaching - funding to provide on-the-job support and training for a defined time period;
- Wage Subsidy - funding provided to employers to facilitate a direct job placement for an individual;
- Self-employment - assistance related to self employment is in the form of support for goods & services directly related to supporting the person's disability, ie. the adaptation of disability specific tools and equipment required to operate an approved business.

Individuals who have a disability and are currently employed are not eligible for services unless they are deemed to be experiencing a "vocational crisis". Individuals are considered to be in a "Vocational crisis" if:

- the circumstances with regard to the existing disability have changed and now prevent the individual from performing a job they once performed; or
- the nature of the work has changed and the individual needs support to adapt to the changed needs of the job.

## Technical or Medical Aid Supports

The program provides disability-related supports to assist individuals as part of their employment plan or to individuals defined to be in a vocational crisis. An eligible support includes a medical or technical aid, or good, or service that would enable an individual to enhance their employability and/or continue in their employment. Medical and/or technical aids or goods or services are not provided to the individual for personal use only, but are provided to support the training and/or employment needs of individuals.

The following are considered eligible supports:

- Orthotic appliance - an apparatus used to support, align, prevent or correct deformities, or to improve the function of moveable parts of the body. Such appliances may include braces, splints, shoe modifications, and special seating molds for wheelchairs
- Canes, Crutches, Walkers - a mobility aid
- Wheelchairs and Similar Equipment - such mobility aid appliances include manual and electric wheelchairs, power carts and scooters. Requests for purchases of power or ultra light wheelchairs or scooters are considered on the basis of medical necessity and to avert a vocational crisis.

- Appliances for the Hearing Impaired - such as hearing aids or personal FM systems;
- Appliances for the Vision Impaired – such as computers and software to support the disability, tape recorders, reading equipment, Braille calculator, high intensity lamps, braille and in some cases, special lenses may also be provided.
- Modifications to Vehicles - modifications can be provided when an individual does not have access to accessible public transportation and needs a car or van to avert a vocational crisis. Vans may be converted to accommodate wheelchair use by the provision of a wheelchair lift. Driving controls may also be adapted.
- Tools and Equipment - the purchase of special equipment or modifications to tools and equipment to support an individual's disability
- Interpretative and Other Support Services - funding is available to purchase a limited number of hours of interpreting services from an approved source in the community to assist with training or employment opportunities.
- Wage Subsidy - a wage subsidy can be provided for an individual that is ready to work. The subsidy is provided for a defined period of time.
- Job Coaching - funding is available to provide the services of a job coach, or other types of work site training to help people deal with issues of the job. This support is generally provided when an individual is beginning a job.

## Project Support:

In addition to supporting individuals living with disabilities directly, a number of projects have received support through the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. A few examples include funding provided to the following projects:

Touch on Wood – funding is provided to support individuals living with a mental illness to assist them to receive the supports and gain skills that will move them toward employment.

Affirmative Industries of Nova Scotia – funding is provided to employ job coaching services to support individuals to attach to, or remain attached to, the labour market. The job coaching interventions are generally short term interventions.

Canning Area Parents for Real Employment - funding provided through this project supports disabled individuals to operate their own businesses in the Canning area.

Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing - funding is provided to this organization to support individuals with hearing disabilities.

On a yearly basis, the Department of Community Services' Employment Support and Income Assistance Program staff serves a caseload of approximately 38,200 individuals and families. Approximately 40% of this caseload has been identified as individuals living with a disability. During the 2007 – 2008 fiscal year, Caseworkers provided various types of support to these individuals including support for the development of employability plans as a means to attach to the labour market. Other direct services provided include:

- Assessment Services
- Employment and Career Counseling
- Referrals to appropriate service providers
- Referrals for training programs
- Support for individuals requiring a job coach
- Support for employment participation

In addition to the direct services provided, approximately 200 interventions were made through the LMAPWD program to support individuals to receive the technical aids, tools and other supports they required to participate in their employment plans or to remain employed.

## Department of Education

Post-Secondary Disability Services (PSDS) provides grants, goods and services to support students with disabilities. With themes of accessibility, equity and inclusion; PSDS actively demonstrates leadership by

- setting priorities and policies based on consultation, research and proven results
- allocating funding that supports these priorities and policies
- demonstrating the benefits of system-wide co-ordination and collaboration in everything from decision-making to delivery of services and
- being transparent in processes and accountable for results - evidence based management

Post-Secondary Disability Services' mission is to assist students with permanent disabilities in achieving individual success in their post secondary studies by reducing or removing educational-related barriers through the provision of grants, goods, and services. Ultimately, achieving individual success translates to enhanced employability.

Not all students with disabilities attending post secondary institutions receive support. Being disabled does not necessarily mean needing help. For those who do require support, however, the Post-Secondary Disability Services division does ensure that all reasonable disability related supports are available and provided in a timely and professional manner. The division's service delivery is progressive ensuring students with disabilities have better opportunities to succeed.

It is now three years since the Baseline Annual Report (2004/2005) and the numbers of students with disabilities attending and graduating from post secondary continues to grow. PSDS has tracked students with disabilities participation, supports provided and graduation from post secondary training for Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (LMPAD) eligible students. This fourth Annual Report builds upon previous statistics and profiles trends and themes from statistical recording and research activities. The data profiled provides evidence that the programs offered by PSDS and its post secondary partners are having a meaningful impact on the lives of thousands of Nova Scotia post secondary students with disabilities.

### Participation and Graduation:

Each year since 2004/2005 the number of students with disabilities attending and self-disclosing their disability to their post secondary institute has risen. In 2007/2008 the number grew to 2738 an increase of 71% since 2003/2004. Table 1 provides the number of post secondary students who self identify as having a disability. The trend is positive; each year more persons with disabilities are making the commitment to attend post secondary training.

<b>Table 1: Number of self-identifying Students with Disabilities (SwD) attending post secondary training from 2003/2004 to 2007/2008</b>		
School year	Number of self-identifying students	% Increase
2003/2004	1600	Baseline year
2004/2005	1949	21.8%
2005/2006	2273	16.6%
2006/2007	2469	8.6%
2007/2008	2738	11%

Table 2 provides a breakdown of program choice for students with disabilities in university programs. 2007/2008 presents itself as a baseline year for tracking this statistic.

<b>Table 2 Undergraduate Degree of choice for the 2007/2008 school year</b>			
Degree	Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Commerce
Percentage	64%	24%	13%

Between the 2004/2005 school year and the 2007/2008 school year there was a 57% increase in the number of students with disabilities graduating from post secondary training. This is expected to increase over the next several years, reflecting the growing number of students with disabilities attending and/or disclosing their disability.

<b>Table 3: 2004/2005 to 2007/2008 student with disability graduates</b>		
School year	Number of graduates	% Increase
2004/2005	369	baseline
2005/2006	517	41%
2006/2007	537	4%
2007/2008	578	8%

Universities reported little change in their number of graduates. This may reflect the fact that a student with disability typically requires 5 to 6 academic years to complete their undergraduate degree. The number of graduating students with disabilities is expected to increase significantly over the next several years reflecting increases in enrollment during the period between 2003 and 2007.

## Disability Grants

Students with disabilities qualifying for provincial or federal student loans benefited from two disability specific financial grants to help pay the costs of their studies. These grants were contingent upon the student meeting program disability eligibility criteria and having financial need as determined through the student loan application process. Grants provided were a maximum of \$4,000 (\$2,000 Canada Access Grant, \$2,000 Provincial Access Grant) yearly for university students and \$3,000 (\$2,000 Canada Access Grant, \$1,000 Provincial Access Grant) yearly for Community College or Private Career College students.

Grant	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Provincial Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities	\$975,637	\$930,996	\$984,292
Canada Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities	\$1,531,072	\$1,716,200	\$1,905,458
Total both grants	\$2,506,709	\$2,647,196	\$2,889,750

The total amount of funding disbursed in grants has risen 15% between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008.

Grant	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Average Provincial Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities	\$1,448	\$1,457	\$1,560
Average Canada Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities	\$1,958	\$1,964	\$1,950

The average grant provided to students qualifying for either grant has increased slightly; over \$100 for the Provincial Access Grant while there was a slight decrease in the Canada Access Grant.

Grant	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Provincial Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities	674	639	631
Canada Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities	782	874	977

The number of students obtaining Provincial Access Grant decreased slightly. The number of students obtaining the Canada Access Grant, which is provided at the beginning of the school year, has increased 25% between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008.

## Employment

In March of 2007 the Canadian Council on Learning and the Department of Education represented by the Post-Secondary Disability Services Division agreed to collaboratively engage in a five year study on student success, employment related outcomes and life's experiences of graduating and non-graduating students with disabilities. In the summer of 2007 the first in a yearly series of one year post-graduation or withdrawal follow-up surveys of students with disabilities was completed.

Educational attainment is a key determinant of both labour force outcomes and of societal and individual health in Canada. There is a growing body of evidence that the association of these outcomes to educational attainment is especially important to adults with disabilities. Several studies in Canada and the U.S. in recent years have demonstrated dramatic improvements in employment outcomes for adults with disabilities who have completed a post secondary credential.<sup>1</sup> Overall, these studies observe that employment outcomes are significantly improved for adults with disabilities who have completed some post secondary education. Specific observations include:

- increasing labour force participation since 1999 but still a gap compared to those without disabilities remains
- employment rates roughly equal to non-disabled peers

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<sup>1</sup> Several studies and reports are cited in the report including:

- Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, *Advancing the Inclusion of People with Disabilities*, 2006
- Nova Scotia, Department of Education and Department of Health, *Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities, Annual Report 2006-07, 2007*
- Canada, Statistics Canada, *Disability in Canada: A 2001 Profile*, 2003, cat. no. 89-587
- Fitchen, C.S., Jorgensen, S., Havel, A., Lamb, & Barile, M., *College Students with Disabilities: Their Future and Success. Final Report Presented to FQRSC*, Spring 2006
- Madaus, J.W., *Employment Outcomes of University Graduates with Learning Disabilities, Learning Disability Quarterly*, 29(1), p19-31, 2006
- Gerber, P. J., Price, L. A., Mulligan, R., Shessel, I. (2004). Beyond Transition: A comparison of the Employment Experiences of American and Canadian Adults with LD. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, Vol. 37(4), p283-291.
- Madaus, J. W., Ruban, L. M., Foley, T. E., McGuire, J.M. (2003). *Attributes Contributing to the Employment Satisfaction of University Graduates with Learning Disabilities. Learning Disability Quarterly*, 26, p159-169.
- Madaus, J. W., Zhao, J., Ruban, L. M. (2008). *Employment Satisfaction of University Graduates with Learning Disabilities. Remedial and Special Education OnlineFirst*.
- Witte, R. H., Philips, L. Kakela, M. (1998). *Job Satisfaction of College Graduates with Learning Disabilities. Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31, p259-265.

- employment in occupations related to studies still lagging for disabled graduates relative to those without disabilities
- no significant difference in earnings for similar work

In total, there were 259 surveys completed. Two-thirds were completed online and one-third completed by phone.<sup>2</sup> With 259 respondents from a population of 570, there is a margin of error of 4.5% using a 95 % confidence interval, where responses are close to the middle – i.e. around 50%. As responses approach 90%, the margin of error falls to 2.7%

The survey population included all former students who had applied to the Nova Scotia Student Assistance programs for funding and/or supports related to their disabilities to study at one of Nova Scotia’s universities or the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). The sample was limited to those students who had either graduated or withdrawn from studies in the 2005-06 academic year.

The breakdown of survey respondents by institution type and status is provided in Table 7. Overall, 75% of survey respondents had studied at NSCC and 25% had studied at a university. This aligns with the breakdown of the survey population where 76% (435 of the 570 survey population) were from NSCC and 24% (135 of the 570) were from universities. When the survey respondents are broken down by program status, 75% of respondents had graduated and 25% had withdrawn from their program.

Program Status	College		University		Total	
Graduated	150	77%	45	69%	195	75%
Withdrew	44	23%	20	31%	64	25%
Total	194	100%	65	100%	259	100%

The results of this survey offer positive confirmation of the previous studies; that there is a substantial improvement in the employment outcomes of adults with disabilities who are graduates and former students of Nova Scotia’s public universities and colleges. In addition, the survey participants expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their learning experiences and report a moderate degree of social integration in the community. The overall results of this survey are summarized as follows:

- 86% labour force participation
- 81% employment rate
- 70% of employment related to studies
- \$29,136 average earnings in full time, related positions
- 90% of employment is in Nova Scotia
- 81% of respondents would recommend their program to another person
- 91% of respondents would recommend their institution to another person

<sup>2</sup> Phone completions include a small number of respondents who sent in print versions or face-to-face delivery supported by the phone survey tool.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and the province's universities and community college have made considerable investments over the past five years to increase the opportunities for adults with disabilities to access post secondary education. This study offers evidence that this investment provides long term benefits to the economy of Nova Scotia by enabling a large number of working aged adults to move into the mainstream of the labour force.

## Results at a Glance

Survey results show that respondents experience positive employment outcomes post studies, that they are satisfied with their learning experiences and that the vast majority continue to live in Nova Scotia post program.<sup>3</sup> Tables 8 and 9 provide summary results by institution type and program status, respectively.

Table 8 shows overall results are very similar by institution type. Respondents from both college and university experience high rates of labour force participation<sup>4</sup> (slightly higher among college respondents), employment<sup>5</sup> and employment relatedness<sup>6</sup>. On average respondents working in full-time related work reported earnings of \$29,136 annually, with university respondents reporting slightly higher annual salaries than college respondents. 90% of respondents report living in Nova Scotia.

Generally, satisfaction levels are high among both groups; with on average 81% of respondents reporting that they would recommend their program and 91% that they would recommend their institution. The percentage of respondents who would recommend their institution is higher among college respondents.

**Table 8: Summary results by institution type**

	College	University	Overall
Labour Force Participation Rate	88%	79%	86%
Employment Rate	82%	80%	81%
Relatedness of Employment	69%	73%	70%
Annual Earnings of Directly Related Full-Time Work	\$28,331	\$32,941	\$29,136
Working in Nova Scotia	92%	86%	90%
Recommend Program	82%	80%	81%
Recommend Institution	94%	83%	91%

<sup>3</sup> It is unknown what percentage of the non-respondents could not be reached because they had moved out of the province and not supplied a forwarding address

<sup>4</sup> Labour force participation is calculated as the percentage of respondents who are either working or looking for work.

<sup>5</sup> Employment rate is calculated as the percentage of labour force participants who are working in paid employment.

<sup>6</sup> Employment relatedness is calculated as the percentage of employed respondents working in a field related to program of study.

When the same measures are analyzed by program status (Table 9), there are both similarities and differences in the survey results. Overall, labour force participation and employment are high for both groups, with those who graduated being more likely to participate in the labour force than those who withdrew from their program. Both groups experienced similar rates of employment. Employment relatedness, however, is significantly different by program status, with those who graduated from their program experiencing a 76% employment relatedness rate and those who withdrew from their program experiencing 47% employment relatedness. Respondents working in full-time related employment report similar annual earnings, averaging \$28,911 per year. The percentage of respondents who continue to live and work in Nova Scotia is high for both groups. Overall, both groups of respondents would recommend their institution. However, respondents who graduated from their program are far more likely to recommend their program than those who withdrew from their program.

**Table 9: Summary results by program status**

	Graduated	Withdrew	Overall
Labour Force Participation Rate	88%	79%	86%
Employment Rate	80%	83%	81%
Relatedness of Employment	76%	47%	70%
Annual Earnings of Directly Related Full-Time Work	\$29,670	\$28,101	\$28,911
Working in Nova Scotia	88%	98%	90 %
Recommend Program	88%	59%	81%
Recommend Institution	94%	84%	91%

These results suggest that the improvement in employment outcomes is experienced by all participants in post secondary education whether they graduate or not, but that those who graduate are more likely to find employment immediately after graduation in occupations related to their studies and to enjoy a modest advantage in their starting wages as well.

## Satisfaction

A client satisfaction survey was developed and administered under the aegis of the Nova Scotia Department of Education, Post-Secondary Disability Services (PSDS) in the months of March and April 2008. The main purpose of the survey was to evaluate the services provided to post secondary students in Nova Scotia who were supported either directly or indirectly by PSDS programs.

The survey was designed for administration using a web-based survey application. 500 university students and 486 students at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) were invited to participate during the month of March, 2008. All participants were initially invited through the personal e-mail addresses available in their PSDS records. Approximately 100 invitations from both the university and college pool of participants were undeliverable due to errors in the e-mail addresses, defunct accounts and full mailboxes. The university invitations

were supplemented by additional contacts by campus Disability Resource Facilitators (DRFs) requested by PSDF staff. The NSCC invitations were supplemented by resending invitations to the students' NSCC e-mail addresses. 172 completed responses were received from university students, generating a 43% response rate and 94 completed responses from NSCC students, generating a 24% response rate. The overall sample of 266 from a population of 775 with valid e-mail addresses represents a 4.8% margin of error with a confidence interval of 95% when responses are evenly split.

## Application for Services, Supports and Funding

Over 80% of students with disabilities who pursue post secondary education require some sort of assistance to manage and coordinate their educational and related services (National Survey of Educational Support Provision, 2000). Challenges unique to students with disabilities arise at institutions that are different than those experienced by non-disabled students.

Through the medical eligibility assessment process and the Canada Student Loan application, PSDS provides students with access to special purpose grants that commonly assist with the purchasing of laptop computers, assistive technology and / or ergonomic aids or other assistive devices to lessen the impact of the disability.

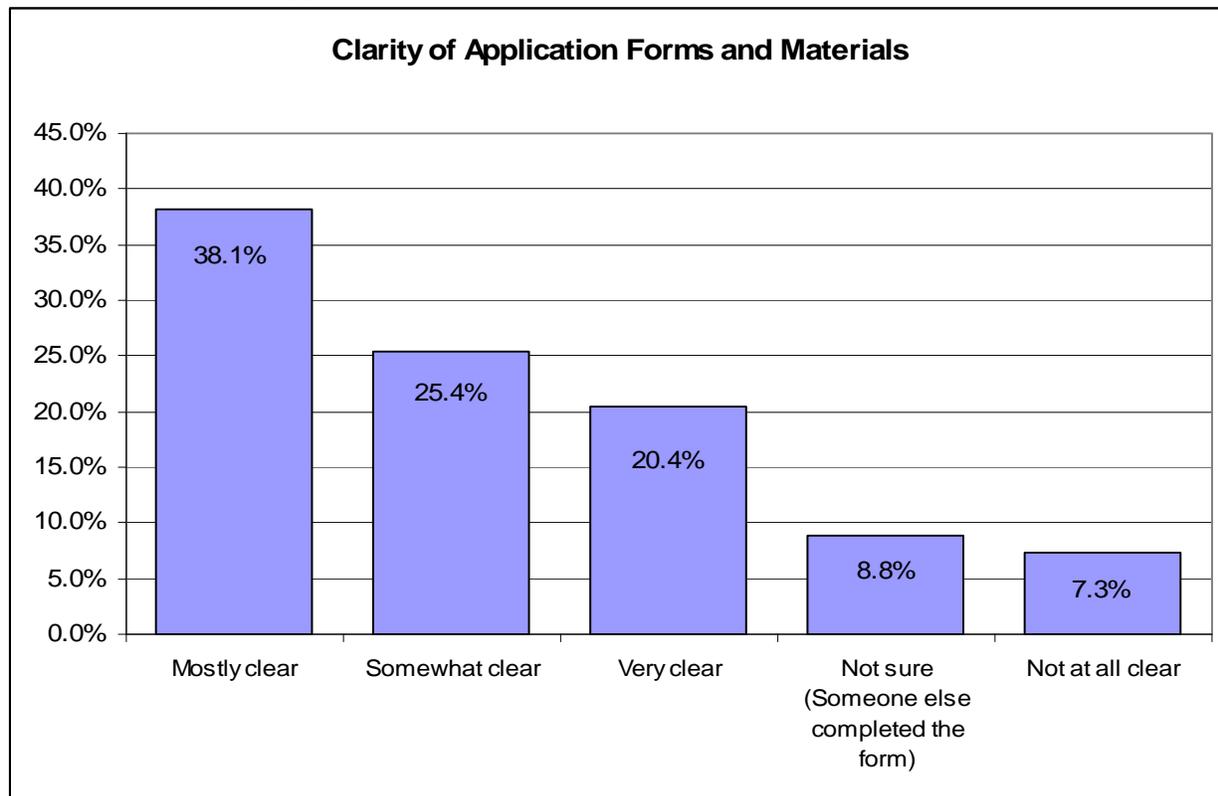
In order to accommodate the delivery of goods and services, the PSDS funds campus based Disability Resource Facilitators (DRFs) at nine universities and all NSCC campuses to provide direct client services that reduce or remove identified barriers for students with disabilities.

<b>Table 10: When was medical assessment form and student loan application completed?</b>		
	Count	Percent
In a previous academic year (before 2007-08)	183	71.8%
This academic year (2007-08)	72	28.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

In order to access funded services or financial assistance related to their disability, students are required to complete a medical assessment form. After learning of their eligibility for supports and services, an overwhelming percentage of respondents (92.4%) reported that they were advised to complete and submit the required forms to the Department of Education. Of the respondents, 71.8% reported that they had completed this form in the previous academic year (before 2007-08) while the remaining 28.2% had completed it during the 2007-08 academic year. Over half of the respondents reported that the application forms and materials explaining eligibility for funding or supports were fairly clear and easy to follow. A small percentage of respondents reported that the forms were difficult to complete and needed assistance in

completing them or had someone else complete the forms for them. Of the people who provided assistance with the completion of the application, the majority of respondents reported that their DRF was helpful in the process.

**Chart 1: Clarity of Application Forms and Materials**



A major barrier to access to post secondary education for students with disabilities is directly related to finances as disability-related academic accommodations can be expensive. Overall, 80.9% of the respondents stated that they had received a disability related grant or loan as a result of their application. Received funding had considerable impact on the respondent's ability to complete their studies. Respondents were able to purchase items such as books, assistive technologies, and other resources they needed to succeed academically. For many respondents, without this assistance they would have been unable to continue with their studies.

Barriers in the pursuit of post secondary education affect all students, but students with disabilities often face unique and more frequent challenges. Respondents reported a variety of barriers that they faced, including but not limited to

- financial resources / affordability of education
- bureaucracy or delays in accessing supports
- access to necessary learning supports in high school
- being pre-judged as not capable of succeeding in school
- lack of academic preparedness and readiness

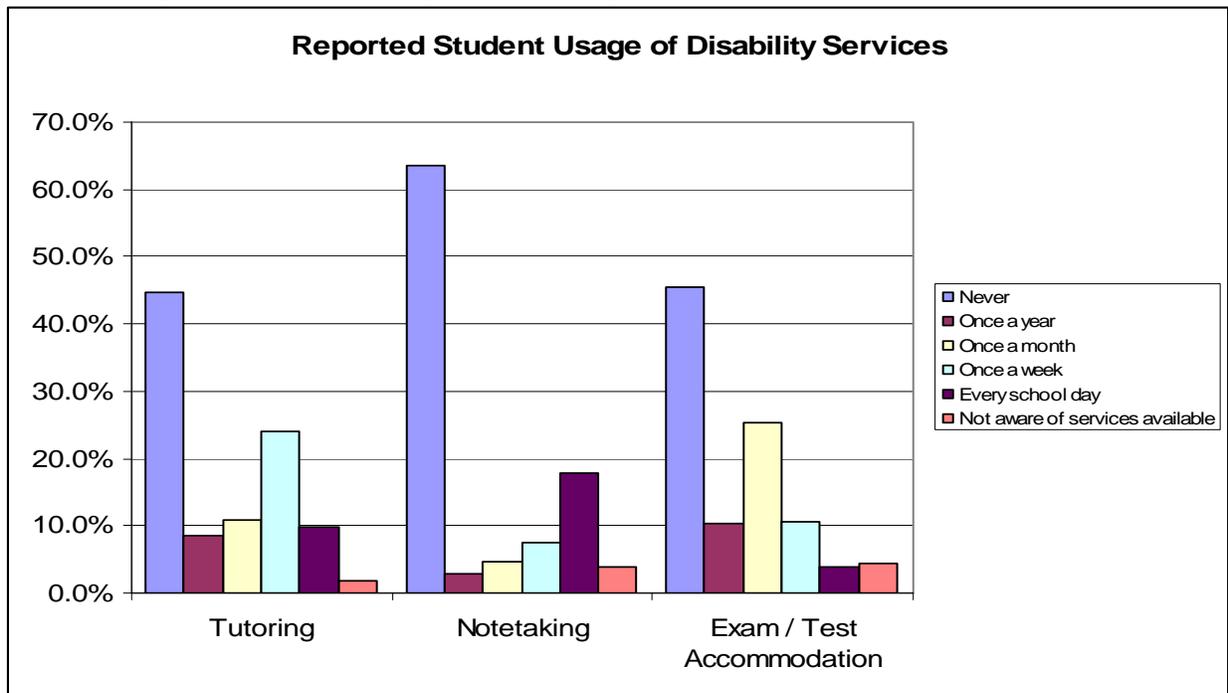
- low expectation on the part of the people with whom they interact
- low self esteem or feeling isolated
- age (older than typical learners)
- difficult life circumstances
- disability previously undiagnosed
- lack of information on supports available to them

## Evaluation of Supports and Services

Academic accommodations, such as note taking, tutoring, testing accommodations and assistive technologies allow students to access information and learn in a variety of ways that are best suited to each individual student.

Access and usage of supports and services by respondents varied by the type of programs and services available. A large number of respondents reported that they did not access services such as note taking, tutoring and exam / test accommodations. Very few respondents reported that they were unaware of the services available to them.

**Chart 2: Reported Student Usage of Disability Services**



Of the respondents who reported using the supports and services within Disability Services, the majority of respondents reported that they found the services helpful or critical to their success as a student: tutoring services (76.8%), note taking services (78.6%), exam / test accommodation services (90.6%), assistive technology services (61.7%) and alternative text, printing and scanning services (80.6%). Of these services, exam / test accommodations services were

reported as most critical. An overwhelming majority of respondents reported that they did not take advantage of the ergonomic services available to them. Respondents who did use the services indicated they would recommend the services offered by their campus to other students with disabilities similar to theirs.

<b>Table 11: Perceived usefulness of supports &amp; services</b>								
Type of Supports / Services	Usefulness of Supports / Services					Recommend Supports / Services		
	Not Helpful	Neutral	Helpful	Critical	Did Not Use	Yes	No	Neutral
Tutoring Services	2.2%	17.9%	52.2%	24.6%	3.0%	86.3%	5.3%	8.4%
Note taking Services	3.6%	16.7%	50.0%	28.6%	1.2%	84.3%	0%	15.7%
Exam/Test Accommodations Services	1.6%	7.8%	45.3%	45.3%	-	94.6%	1.6%	3.9%
Assistive Technology Services	4.0%	14.3%	37.8%	23.9%	19.9%	87.4%	2.6%	9.9%
Ergonomic Aids	2.8%	6.5%	14.0%	5.1%	71.6%	54.5%	6.3%	39.2%
Alternative Text, Scanning & Printing Services	4.5%	14.9%	56.7%	23.9%	-	89.6%	1.5%	9.0%

## Evaluation of Learning Experience

Reflecting back on their learning experience, the vast majority of respondents had a positive experience at their institution. Respondents felt that they were treated with dignity by their DRF and their instructors and for the most part were aware of the disability related supports available to them. However, the percentage of respondents who felt comfortable seeking additional course help was low. Some respondents indicated there was more interaction required between the faculty member and disability services to better understand the respondent's disability and their required needs.

**Table 12: Evaluations of Learning Experience**

	Agree	Disagree
Treated with dignity and respect by Disability Services staff on campus	93.0%	7.0%
Disability Services staff responded quickly and effectively to need for disability related support	89.9%	10.1%
Treated with dignity and respect by faculty	89.3%	10.7%
Able to access disability related supports to help with learning needs	85.8%	14.2%
Aware of disability related supports available at the campus	86.7%	13.3%
Having access to disability related supports allow for a focus on learning	89.8%	10.2%
Comfortable seeking additional course help when needed	77.0%	23.0%
Given equal or fair (non-discriminatory) opportunities as other students	85.9%	14.1%

## Partnerships

Post-Secondary Disability Services respects and capitalizes on the expertise of advocacy organizations providing services to Nova Scotians with disabilities. Examples of this are service delivery agreements established with the Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians, and the Independent Living Resource Centre.

### **Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians (SDHHNS)**

Post-Secondary Disability Services has a service contract with the SDHHNS whereby the society assumes responsibility for the provision of reliable and competent American Sign Language Interpreter services to Nova Scotians who are deaf or hard of hearing attending post secondary. In 2007/2008 PSDS provided approximately \$380,000 to the SDHHNS for interpreting services for six deaf students attending post secondary training.

## **Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC)**

Post-Secondary Disability Services has a similar service contract with the Independent Resource Living Centre (ILRC). The agreement provides funding to the ILRC to implement a student self-managed attendant care program. Students are trained by the ILRC in the recruitment, hiring, training and payroll functions of employing an attendant. Students involved with ILRC manage their attendant care needs as a business and acquire attendant care management capacities that will support their independence beyond their post secondary experience. In 2007/2008 PSDS provided approximately \$166,000 the ILRC for twelve post secondary students requiring attendant care.

## **Post Secondary Partners**

Post-Secondary Disability Services (PSDS) has Memorandums of Understanding with Universities across the province as well as the Nova Scotia Community College. The Memorandums of Understanding detail PSDS's and the post secondary institutional commitments to ensure that disability-related goods and services are readily available, provided professionally and in a manner that responds to the individual student's needs.

Each memorandum has a requirement that the post secondary institution develop, publish and implement a Three Year Accessibility Plan (TYAP). The TYAP details the efforts they will make to remove physical, systemic or academic barriers a student may experience while attending the institution. As well, it details how the post secondary institution will enhance existing approaches to meet exceptional needs of its students.

## **PSDS Accomplishments**

In 2007/2008 PSDS continued to engage its post secondary partners and the public education system in the following five initiatives intended to support and advance access, equity and inclusion.

## **Research and evaluation**

Program research and evaluation activities for 2007/2008 included:

- PSDS partnered with the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and public post secondary institutions in the development and implementation of the first year of a five year study investigating the employment outcome of students with disabilities one year post graduation or withdrawn from studies. The first year of Longitudinal Study for the class of 2005/2006 was completed in October 2007. This report on first year results can be found on the PSDS web-site - <http://psds.ednet.ns.ca/index.html>
- PSDS conducted a survey of students with disabilities enrolled in post secondary to determine how well services are being provided and where gaps in service may exist. The survey was conducted in March/May 2008. The 2008 satisfaction survey report can be found at <http://psds.ednet.ns.ca/index.html>

PSDS continued to work on the implementation of an evaluation of LMAPD in partnership with the Departments of Health and Community Services as well as Human Resource Development Canada. The evaluation will focus on LMAPD programs offered by each provincial department.

### **Standards/Policy Development**

PSDS completed an environmental scan of disability related services provided at post secondary institutions within the province. A need was identified to determine current service levels and standards in order to address any inconsistencies, services issues and gaps. The environmental scan was completed on all MOU institutions. The scan report is posted at <http://psds.ednet.ns.ca/index.html>.

### **Review Program Intake System**

Using the satisfaction survey and gathering additional feedback from partners, PSDS reviewed its recently established client intake processes. One significant result of the intake review was the development of a policy document. The policy document is expected to be ready for release in the fall of 2008.

### **Improve Knowledge/Information Management**

PSDS began to develop an information management system that can meet the evidence based decision making and evaluation requirements of its programs. PSDS has ambitions of developing and maintaining a knowledge/information system for itself and its post secondary partners which:

- supports setting policies and priorities based on consultation, research and proven results;
- ensures the appropriate allocation of funding that support these policies and priorities;
- demonstrates the benefits of system-wide program co-ordination and collaboration in everything from decision-making to delivery of services; and is transparent in processes and accountable for results.

### **Marketing and Communications**

PSDS completed its first marketing plan to promote programs and advise Nova Scotians with disabilities and the general public of the grants, goods and services offered by PSDS. The Marketing Plan was provided to all post secondary partners at the Post-Secondary Disability Services Forum in June 2008.

## Department of Health, Mental Health Services

Mental Health Employability programs can be accessed through the Clubhouse and Employment Skill Development and Support Programs located in various areas of the province. Typical participants in mental health employability programs include working age adults with mental disabilities who have the potential for employability, and consumers of mental health programs who have the potential for employability.

The Clubhouse programs operate by a set of international standards and believe the following: that work is a deeply regenerative & reintegrative force in our lives; that employment is a fundamental right of citizenship; and that employment opportunities need to be available to all members regardless of diagnosis or disability.

Clubhouses are located in Truro, New Glasgow, Sydney, Dartmouth and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Clubhouse programs address all five priority areas and provide varying degrees of the following: on site skill development: participation in a “work ordered day”;

- vocational development: supported employment, transitional employment and independent employment; and
- job readiness: resume writing, job search, interviewing, crisis vocational counseling and communication skills with employers and peers.

The Employment Skill Development and Support programs provide the following: assist in the development of vocational skills to obtain employment; provide an opportunity to develop work skills for employment; provide assistance with learning new skills to start own business; and help participants gain confidence in their own ability to seek job opportunities and obtain satisfactory work.

The Employment Skill Development and Support Programs are located in Sydney, and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. These programs address all five priority areas and provide varying degrees of the following:

- job readiness skill development;
- work skill development;
- vocational training; and
- entrepreneurial skill development.

### Program Indicators

Employment is a key determinant of health and steps to develop marketable employability skills in persons with mental health disabilities is a priority of community supports programs. The mental health employability programs are taking action to change the way employers view persons with mental illness. For example, many clubhouse programs offer “transitional” and “supported” employment opportunities for individual members, and have implemented processes for attaining job placements with employers.

The long term goal for many people in recovery from mental illness is the attainment of employment. However, short term successes such as regular attendance and participation on an individual basis in the clubhouse programs are also recognized as important steps along the way to employment.

For the fiscal year 2007-08, each employability program reported on the total number of individuals who regularly attended, and actively participated in, the clubhouse and employment skill development and support programs. Participation was affected by a number of factors including the individual's health status, and therefore varied according to the individual. The total number of individuals who regularly attended and participated in the employability programs were the following: 162 for Employment Skill Development and Support, and 439 for Clubhouse Programs.

The structure of the clubhouse programs allowed for activities with both set time periods and ongoing participation in the work ordered day program. Movement from one activity to another depended on an individual's choice and his/her readiness for more structure. Each employability program reported on the total number of individuals who successfully completed the program when the clubhouse or employment skill development and support program has a start and an end date. Most of the employment skill development and support programs had specified start and end dates and many clubhouse programs did not. The numbers were the following: 104 for Employment Skill Development and Support, and 39 for Clubhouse Programs.

Each employability program reported on the total number of individuals who following completion of an employability program gained employment as a result of this participation. The numbers were the following: 38 for Employment Skill Development and Support, and 172 for Clubhouse Programs.

For some individuals, ongoing assistance of the mental health program to remain employed was required. Each employability program reported on the total number of individuals who once obtaining employment were able to be maintained in that employment with some support from the employability program. The numbers were the following: 30 for Employment Skill Development and Support, and 237 for Clubhouse Programs.

## Mental Health Standards

Employment is a key determinant of health and mental health programs view developing marketable employability skills in persons with mental health disabilities as a priority of Community Supports programs. The Community Mental Health Supports for Adults (CMHSA) core program is based on psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery principles and practices, and two models of best practices that adhere to these principles are Supported Employment (SE) and Individual Placement and Support (IPS). Employability programs embracing these models are promoted in the field, and the revised CMHSA standards embracing these principles are available on our web site and will guide future initiatives in Nova Scotia.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/downloads/standards.pdf>

## Arm and Leg Prostheses

This program was established to ensure Nova Scotians, who require a conventional limb prosthesis as a substitute for a partially or totally absent arm or leg are provided financial coverage to access prosthetic devices and services. Prosthetic devices help address barriers to employability for persons in need of such devices. Prosthetic services include .initial fitting and provision of prosthetic devices, replacement and/or repair of the device so as to facilitate employability. In 2007-08, 327 persons received 668 services under the arm and leg prostheses program.

## Department of Health Promotion and Protection, Addiction Services

Addiction Services offers a wide range of programs and services in education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for individuals, families and communities affected by substance use-related problems. Addiction Services help clients to prepare for, gain, and keep productive roles in the community. The goal is to reduce the disabling effects of substance use related problems that create barriers for preparing for, attaining, and retaining employment. The target population comprises individuals sixteen years of age or older who are harmfully involved with alcohol and other drugs.

Addiction Services, Department of Health Promotion and Protection (HPP) and the Department of Health (DOH), is responsible for defining core services, development and review of standards for service delivery, development of provincial policy, monitoring and audit of programs, consultation with services in the districts, and facilitation of provincial program development. A range of treatment and rehabilitation options are delivered by service providers under District Health Authorities throughout the province. Options are based on a client's needs, short and long term goals and ongoing assessment. Addiction Services programs can be accessed through a range of prevention and treatment services located in more than 42 offices throughout the province. Addiction Services Employability Programs are focused on the following areas: (1) education and training; (2) employment participation; (3) connecting employers and persons with disabilities; and (4) building knowledge.

Workplace Outreach	Provision of strong liaison between Addiction Services and local industry to lessen the impact of disability and address vocational crises including employee assistance program policy development, consultations, training, workplace initiated intervention services, employee awareness seminars.
Treatment	Focus is on the impact of the disability on employability, maintenance of motivation to change, improving client independence. Provision of: assessment (employability) and case management; job preparation skills; employment reintegration; stabilizing living arrangement; family, financial, legal and physical health issues; psychosocial needs re life skills, anger management, communication and coping skills; referrals.

Specific information on services offered throughout the DHAs can be found at <http://www.addictionservices.ns.ca>.

Addiction Services recovers funding of \$2.8 million annually to cover its expenditures for providing a range of addiction services under the Canada - Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. Recovery of funding is provided in recognition of the link between employability, and the treatment and rehabilitation of persons with substance use problems. Individual clients of Addiction Services are considered to have a disability.

## Program Indicators

Addiction Services facilitate the improvement of work-related skills (e.g., personal management skills) through participation in addiction education programs, structured treatment program, and community-based programs. The focus of Addiction Services is on improving client independence and facilitates clients' connection to employers through ongoing assessment and treatment planning.

There is considerable evidence in the literature that services in support of addiction improve the employability of clients that complete the programs offered. While the motivation for introducing an employability aspect to addictions counseling varies internationally, programs in jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom and Spain strongly believe that their programs for addicted persons need to be linked to the goal of social re-integration, including employment.

	DHAs 1,2,3	DHAs 4,5,6	DHAs 7,8	DHA 9	Provincial Total
Number of people actively participating in LMAPD program	3279	2187	3130	2939	11535
Number of people successfully completing LMAPD program	776	951	1293	1650	4670
Number of people employed as a result of LMAPD program	208	190	275	390	1063
Number of people sustained in employment in the case of vocational crisis	220	237	512	272	1241

### Sources

- 1-Addiction Services Statistical Information System Technology (Assist).
- 2-Staff recall and a manual review of case files.

### Notes

\*Numbers were not available for clients participating in the adolescent CHOICES program offered by the IWK Health Centre.

\*Measures relating to client employment and sustained employment are based on staff recall and are underestimated. Not all staff were able to respond to the request for data collection. The definitions for the aforementioned measures were reversed in collecting the data. (Report Date: 2008-07-16)

## Estimated Cost-shared Expenditures

2007 – 08	Total Expenditure	Federal Contribution	Provincial Contribution
<b>Community Services, Employment Assistance</b>			
Employment related Assessment, Career Counseling & Program Delivery	2,246,362	781,974	1,464,388
Provision of Disability related Supports	752,813	168,820	583,993
Special Needs Supports	937,436	285,330	652,106
Program Administration	340,821	137,991	202,830
<b>Sub-total:</b>	<b>4,277,432</b>	<b>1,374,115</b>	<b>2,903,317</b>
<b>Education, Post-Secondary Disability Services</b>			
Program Administration	596,690	298,345	298,345
Grants to Students	1,117,890	558,945	558,945
Research	183,120	91,560	91,560
Attendant Care	166,500	83,250	83,250
Interpreter Services	383,600	191,800	191,800
University Disability Program Support	1,216,610	608,305	608,305
NSCC Disability Program Support	1,170,000	585,000	585,000
Other Projects	447,490	315,795	131,695
University & NSCC Program Contributions	2,320,000		2,320,000
<b>Sub-total:</b>	<b>7,601,900</b>	<b>2,733,000</b>	<b>4,868,900</b>
<b>Health, Mental Health</b>			
Arm & Leg Prosthesis	157,823	70,000	87,823
Clubhouse Programs	2,361,402	830,750	1,530,652
Employment Skill & Development Support	349,842	160,600	189,242
<b>Health Promotion and Protection, Addiction Services</b>			
Workplace Outreach	381,225	150,000	231,225
Addiction Services	11,258,656	2,622,615	8,636,041
Administrative Costs	3,199,504	349,150	2,850,354
<b>Sub-total:</b>	<b>17,708,452</b>	<b>4,183,115</b>	<b>13,525,337</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29,587,784</b>	<b>8,290,230</b>	<b>21,297,554</b>

## Societal Indicators

The 2004 baseline report presented societal indicators using data from the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), Canada's principal source of detailed statistical information about disability issues. PALS is a post-census survey, conducted in 2001 and 2006 following the census. The 2006-07 report used another important Statistics Canada survey, the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), to present societal indicators. SLID is conducted annually and is a rich source of information about income, employment, education and other topics for the adult Canadian population. SLID tracks the same individuals over a period of years. The SLID data provided information about the education levels, employment earnings and trends within these measures for people with and without disabilities. New data was not available in time for the current report.

### Labour Force Participation

Chart 3: Percentage of Disabled and Persons without Disabilities (aged 16-64) who were employed

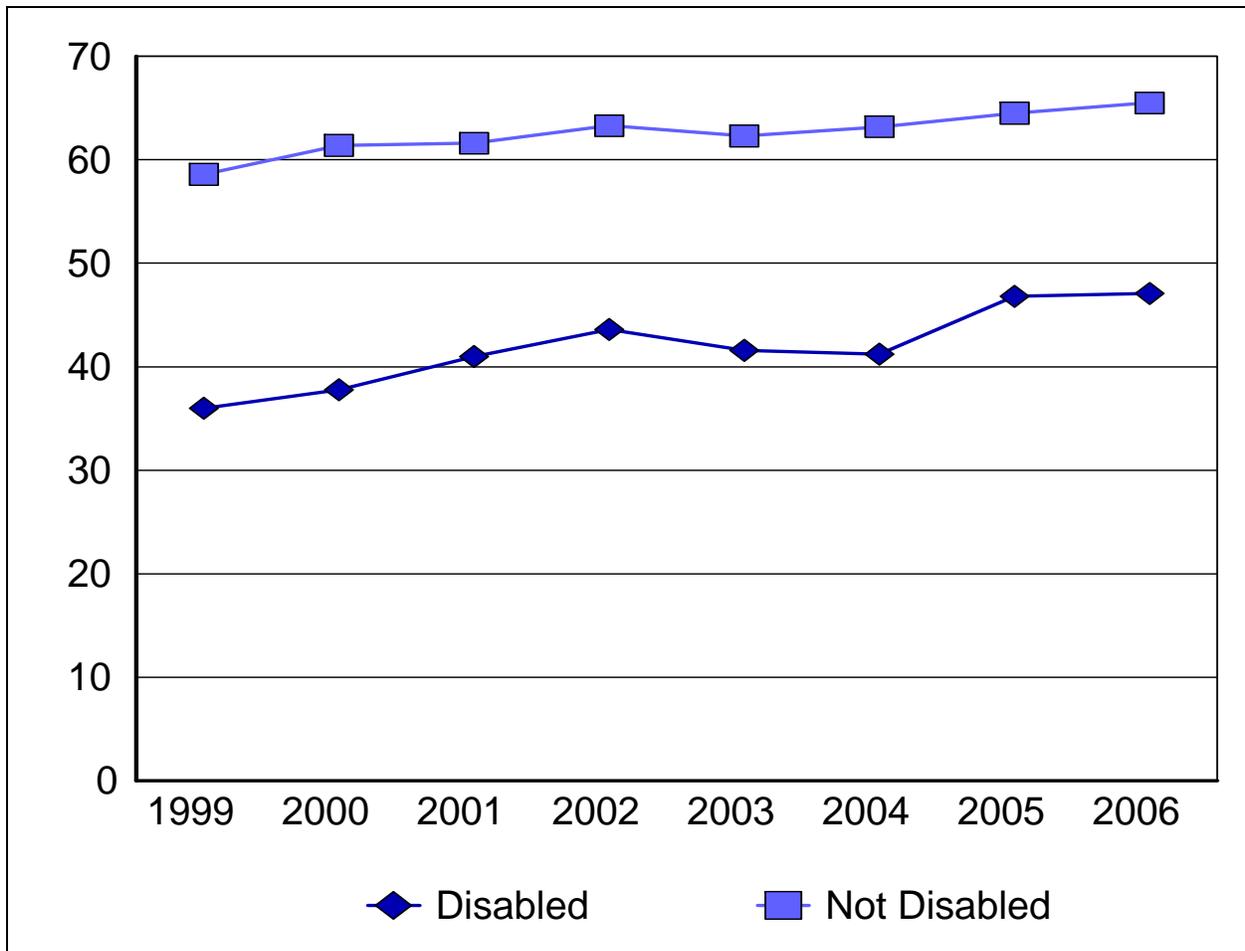
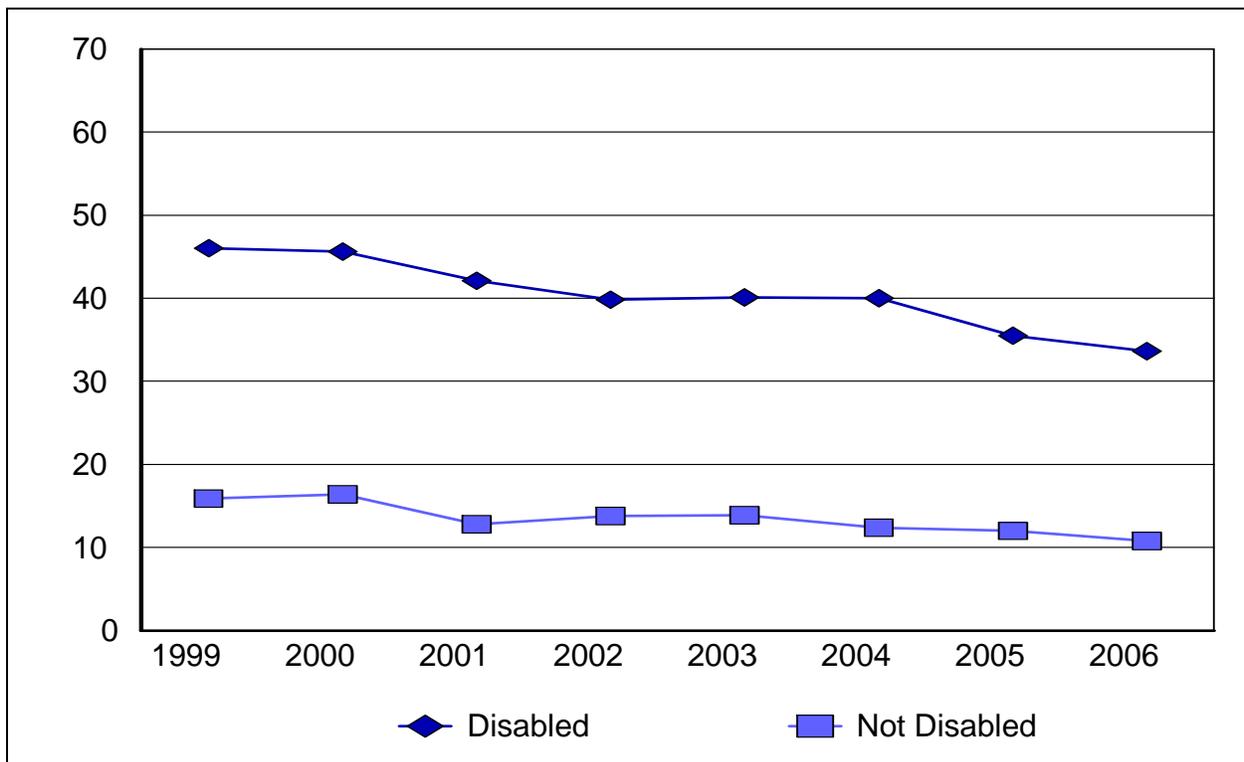


Chart 3 reports the percentage of persons who were employed for the entire year. Between 1999 and 2006 the numbers and percentage of employed disabled persons has increased substantially, from 36% to 47%. During the same period the proportions of persons without disabilities who were employed for the entire year also increased from 58% to 65%. Together with the increased employment, the proportions of persons not participating in the labour force or experiencing periods of unemployment decreased (Chart 4). Between 1999 and 2006 the proportions of disabled persons not in the labour force or unemployed declined from 46% to 34%, while among persons without disabilities the proportions declined from 16% to 11%. People with out disabilities are more likely than persons with disabilities to be employed all year and to be participating in the labour market. An expanding economy and increased job opportunities benefited both disabled persons and persons without disabilities. .

Chart 4: Percentage of Disabled and Persons without Disabilities (aged 16-64) not in the labour force or unemployed



## Income

Increased participation in the labour force has resulted in increases in the proportions of persons with earned income (Chart 5) and increases in average annual income (Chart 6). Chart 5 shows the proportions of disabled persons and persons without disabilities who have earned income. This chart captures people who were employed only part of the year as well as those employed for the whole year. Over the eight year period, the percentage of persons with disabilities who had earned income increased from 55% in 1999 to 67% in 2006. Similarly the percentage of

persons without disabilities who had earned income increased from 82% to 88%. Average incomes also increased over the period. The average earned income among persons with disabilities increased 26% from \$21,300 in 1999 to \$26,300 in 2006 and among persons without disabilities 28% from \$26,100 to \$33,400 over the same period. Between 2005 and 2006 the average income for persons with disabilities declined. Chart 7 shows income distribution among persons with disabilities. Chart 8 shows the income distributions for persons without disabilities. More persons without disabilities are earning higher incomes in more recent years than is the case for persons with disabilities. Both groups are doing better in terms of more people earning higher incomes in 2006 than in 1999.

Chart 5: Percentage of Disabled and Persons without Disabilities (aged 16-64) with earnings

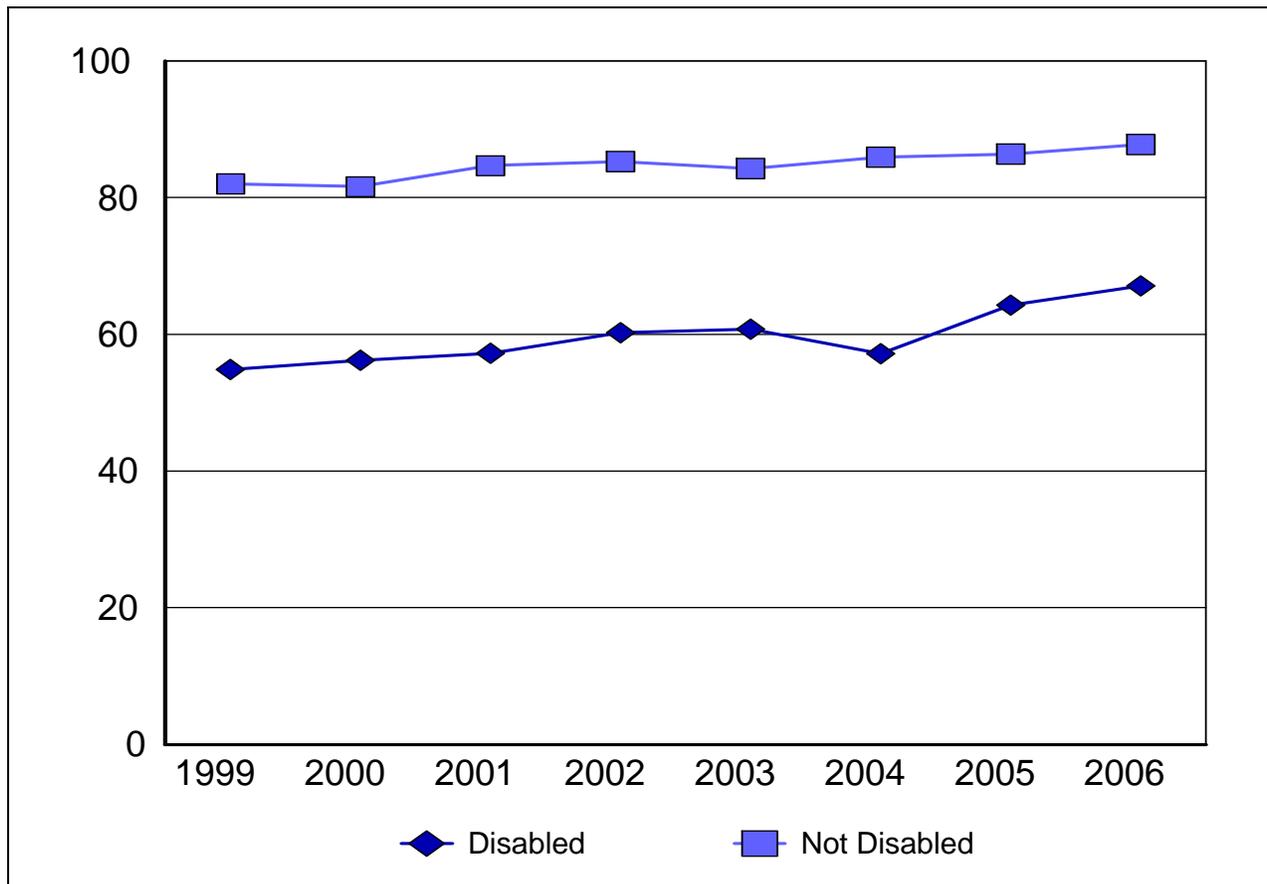


Chart 6: Average Annual Earnings of Disabled and Persons without Disabilities (aged 16-64)

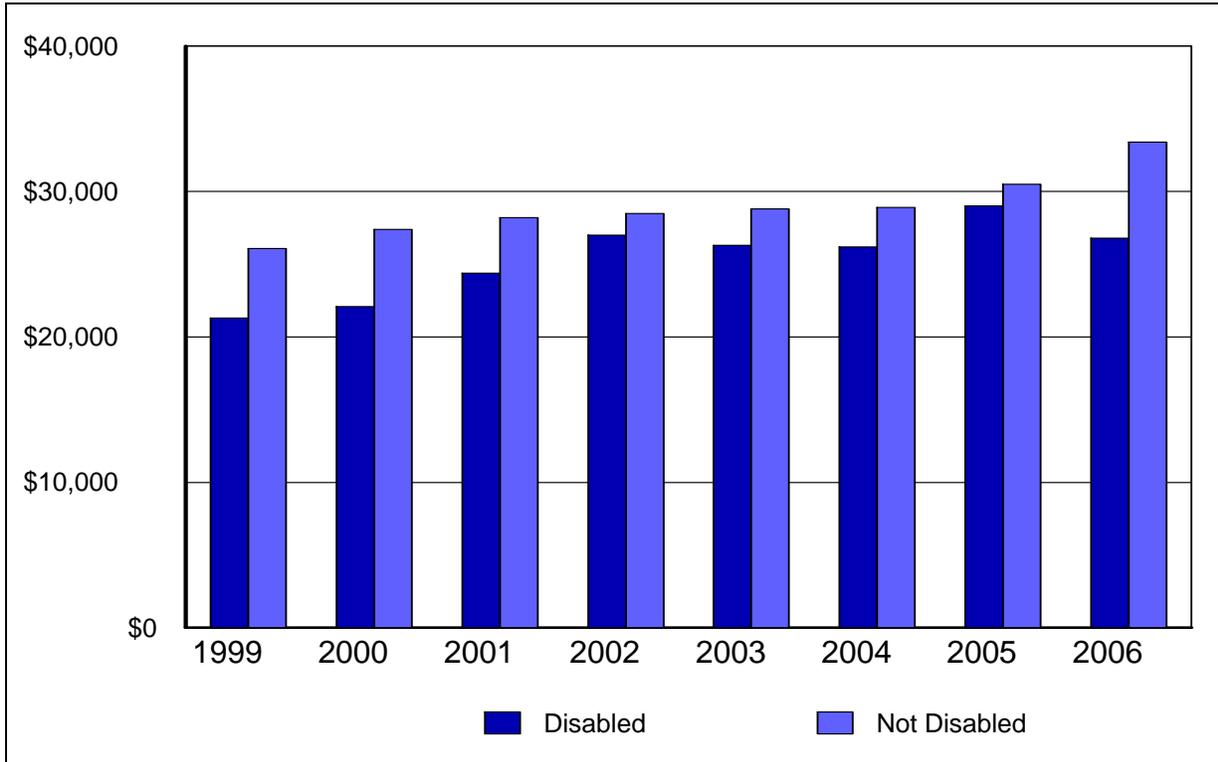


Chart 7: Income Distribution among Disabled Persons (aged 16-64)

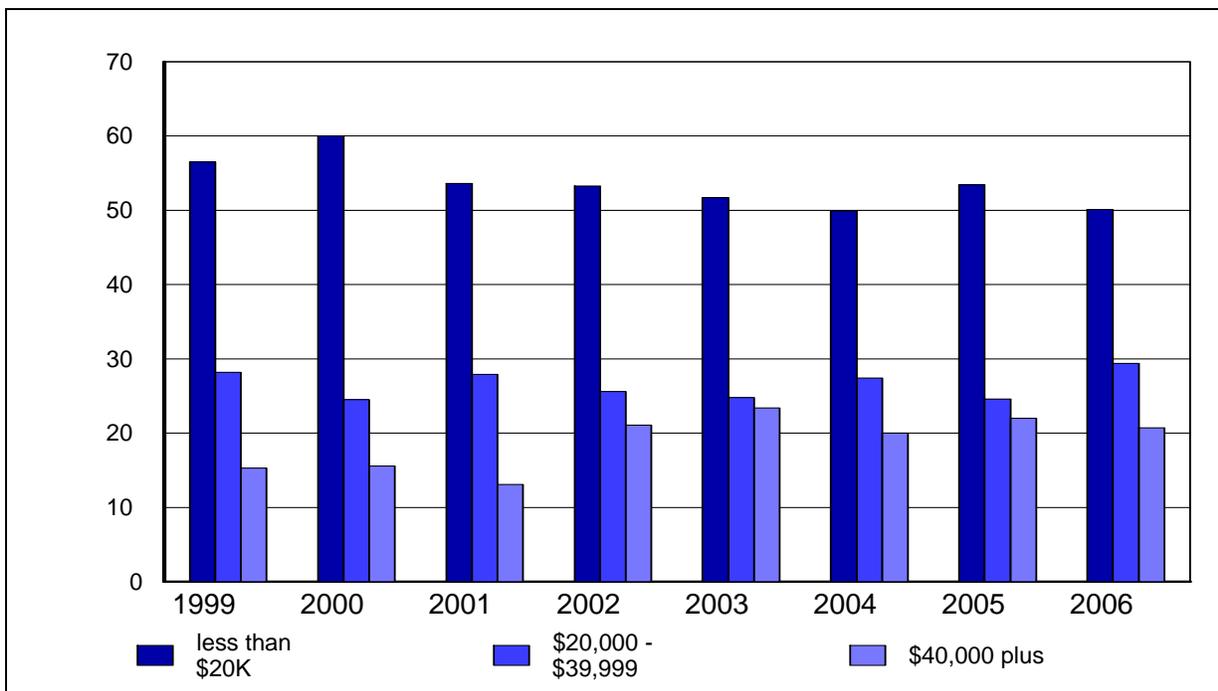
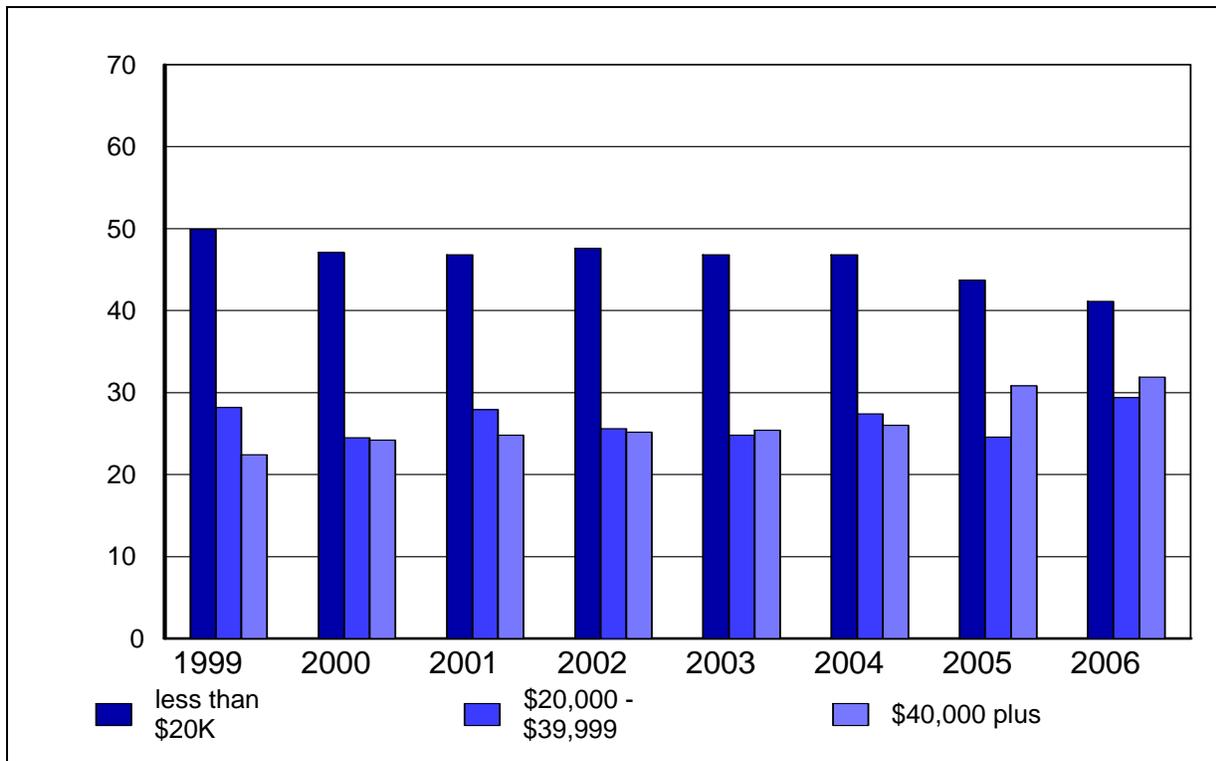


Chart 8: Income Distribution among Persons without Disabilities (aged 16-64)



## Educational Achievement

Charts 9 and 10 show the educational achievement for persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities. There has been an increasing proportion of persons with higher levels of education in both groups. Persons who do not have disabilities are more likely to have completed post-secondary education. Although the proportions of disabled persons who have completed post-secondary education have been increasing and the proportions with only high school or less have been declining, there are significant differences in the educational achievements between the two groups.

Chart 9: Educational Achievement among Disabled Persons (aged 16-64)

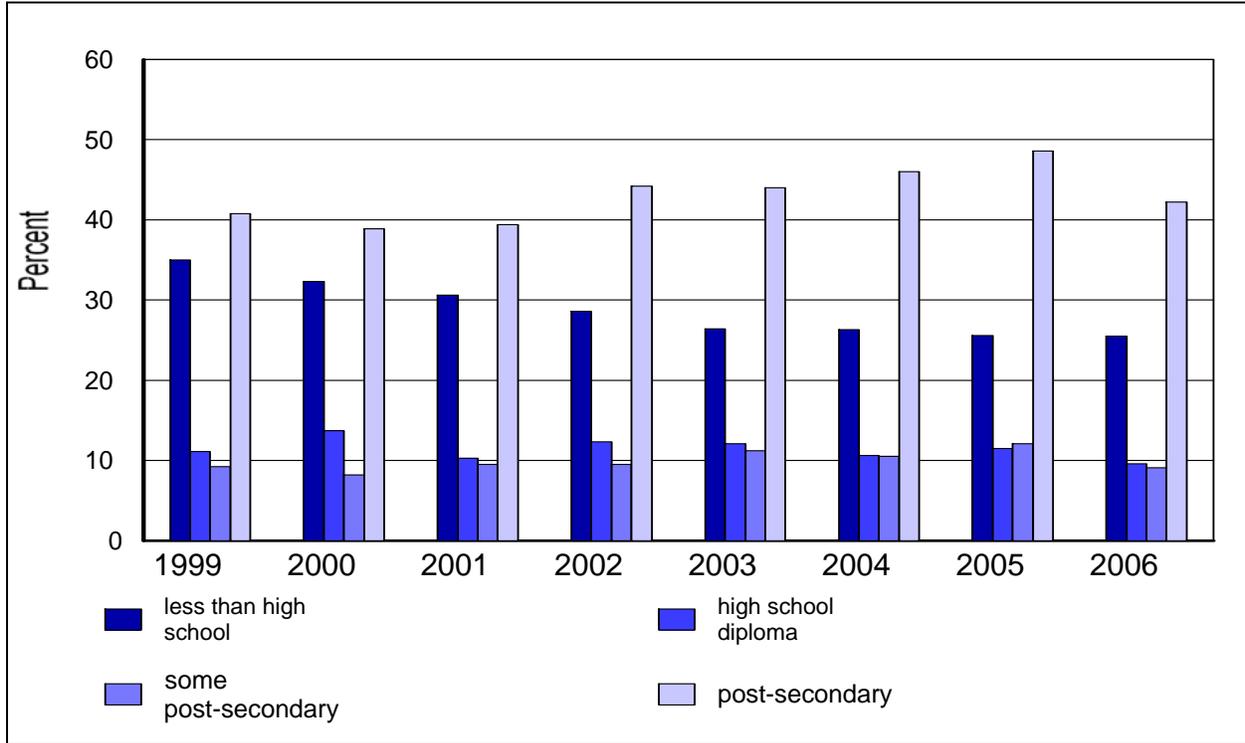
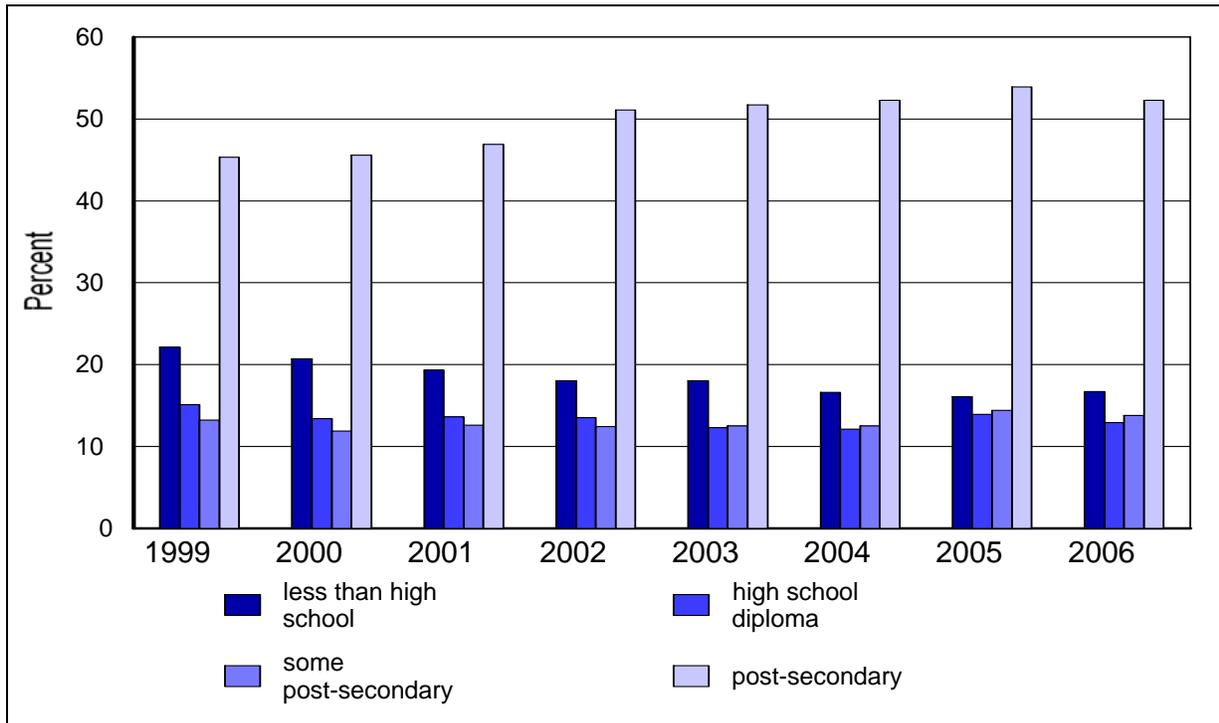


Chart 10: Educational Achievement among Persons without Disabilities (aged 16-64)



## Looking Ahead

The development of the Multilateral Framework for Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities provided an opportunity to maintain and strengthen Nova Scotia's labour market programs and services for persons with disabilities. The current agreement was scheduled to end March 31, 2006. It has been extended through mutual agreement of Nova Scotia and Canada to March 31, 2009.

Nova Scotia is committed to continual improvement of our programs. Program evaluation is a means of assessing the effectiveness of programs and services. Nova Scotia and Human Resource and Social Development Canada will be conducting an evaluation of the programs and services funded under the Canada-Nova Scotia LMAPD agreement in 2009. A Joint Evaluation Committee (JEC) has managed the completion of a literature review, a data review report, an evaluation framework including a logic model, detailed plan and methodology report, and a memorandum of understanding to evaluate the programs and services funded under the Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities. The framework identifies potential performance indicators, outputs and outcomes to address key evaluation issues and questions to meet the evaluation objectives. An information sharing agreement is included in the memorandum of understanding.

Programs and services intended to help persons with disabilities gain and remain attached to the labour force may not be optimally coordinated. A coordinated approach would improve the delivery of employment services to Nova Scotians living with disabilities and maximize the benefits to individuals from available employment services. Before these benefits can be realized there is a need for the service delivery system to clearly understand the employment and pre-employment needs of persons with disabilities and how a coordinated program planning and delivery approach across government, private and community sectors can support these needs better.

The federal government has extended an invitation to Nova Scotia to negotiate the transfer of the Labour Market Development Agreement to the province. The federal government also wishes to discuss the devolvement of disability specific programs such as the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities and the Opportunity Fund. Recently, the Nova Scotia government announced the creation of the Labour and Workforce Development Department. These and other possible changes in labour market partnerships suggest that it is an appropriate time to review the current program and service delivery model that supports Nova Scotians living with disabilities in their efforts to obtain employment.

The Departments of Community Services, Education, Health, and Health Promotion and Protection have begun a process to develop a coordinated strategy between the departments providing employment services to persons with disabilities to improve the delivery of employment programs and services to individuals living with a disability. The strategy would be designed to ensure that employment services for persons with disabilities would be maintained or enhanced as labour market agreements are negotiated and implemented between the federal and provincial governments over the next few years.

Nova Scotia remains committed to public reporting and will continue to release Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities reports to Nova Scotians. Looking ahead to the future affords us the opportunity to reflect on and determine the best course of action. The government of Nova Scotia welcomes the opportunity to work with the Government of Canada to maintain and develop effective ways to provide meaningful supports for persons with disabilities in order that they may partake fully in all aspects of society.