



Together Creating Possibilities



An initiative of
Community Sector Council
Newfoundland and Labrador

SUBMISSION

to

**Human Resources, Labour and Employment Legislative Review
of The *Income Support and Employment Act* and Regulations**

This paper was prepared for

Vibrant Communities St. John's and the Community Sector Council NL

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Table of Contents

PREAMBLE: A NOTE ON OUR APPROACH.....	2
KEY INFORMANTS.....	2
<i>Clients</i>	2
<i>Service Providers</i>	2
INTRODUCTION	4
FINDINGS	6
QUESTION 1: IS THE DIRECTION OF THE LEGISLATION CORRECT?	6
QUESTION 2: WHAT OTHER CHANGES OR IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH FINDING AND MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT?	6
<i>The Trend Towards Clients With Complicated Needs</i>	6
What Would Help	7
<i>The Length of the Supported Transition Period</i>	8
What Would Help	9
QUESTION 3: WHAT OTHER CHANGES OR IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE TO REMOVE BARRIERS OR DISINCENTIVES TO PARTICIPATE IN EMPLOYMENT FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING INCOME SUPPORT?	11
<i>The Barrier of Beginning the Transition</i>	11
What Would Help	12
<i>Dental Health as a Barrier</i>	12
What Would Help	12
<i>Transportation as a Barrier</i>	12
What Would Help	12
<i>Childcare as a Barrier</i>	13
What Would Help	13
<i>Lack of Awareness of Programs and Initiatives</i>	13
What Would Help	14
CONCLUSION	16
CLIENTS’ STANDARD OF LIVING	16
AWARENESS OF OPTIONS.....	16
PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS	16
SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS.....	17
OVERCOMING BARRIERS.....	17
OVER ARCHING ISSUE	17
APPENDIX I	19
WISE ON BELL ISLAND: TARGET INITIATIVE FOR OLDER WORKERS CASE STUDY	19

PREAMBLE: A NOTE ON OUR APPROACH

Our focus was the transition to employment from income support. So our research questions mirrored Questions 1, 2 and 3 from the Legislative Review Consultation Booklet:

1. *Is the direction of the legislation correct?*
2. *What other changes or improvements should be considered for assisting individuals with finding and maintaining employment?*
3. *What other changes or improvements could be made to remove barriers or disincentives to participate in employment for individuals receiving income support?*

Key Informants

We completed a study that involved 21 key informants, as follows.

Clients

- Four (4) clients of HRLE were interviewed individually
- One (1) former client of HRLE was interviewed

[Names have been changed to protect the identity of people involved]

Service Providers

- Nine (9) individual service providers employed by eight community organizations were interviewed individually
- Seven (7) service providers employed by a large community organization took part in a focus group

These organizations deliver employment programs to a range of clients: women, people with disabilities, single parents, youth, tenants of NLHC, long-term HRLE clients and people with multiple challenges, including mental illness and homelessness.

Research Sites: Geographically, our research was carried out in St. John's with a Bell Island component consisting of a case study of a successful employment program—this is provided as an Appendix.

Joanne's Story

"My daughter is old enough now that I want to go back to work. I stayed home with the kids when my husband left but now I want to get out of the situation I'm in, on income support. I want to work in something besides McDonald's. I want to do something professional and I want to go to school for that.

It's taken me a year since I started trying to get back to work and I'm nowhere yet. It's a day's work to talk to someone at HRLE. It's hard to get through on the phone and they don't know who to refer you to. I did the SPAN program and I worked at Brighter Futures with the Healthy Baby Club as a resource mom. They paid me \$300 a month but it wasn't income, it was a stipend, and with the rules, they had to cut my hours and only pay me \$150 a month. So now I'm only getting \$150, which is not much of an incentive and you're supposed to get your bus pass out of that money. My son has to have a special diet and I only get \$30 a month for that so the extra Brighter Futures money was helping. I get child support--\$140 a month—and they deduct it off my cheque. I don't know how that helps kids. I can't keep up with the demand of groceries and my kids wanting stuff.

I was too old for one program because I was over 30 (Joanne is 36). I wanted to do medical terminology at Eastern College but HRLE wouldn't fund it because it was too much money. They referred me to student loans but I can't get a loan because I had one when I was 18 and I defaulted on it. It seems like the mistakes I made in the past I have to pay for now.

I was offered a job as a cleaner with Eastern Health but it was the night-shift and I had no childcare over night. I told them if anything comes up in the day, let me know.

I'm determined but I'm not sure what to do now. And I worry that if I get something, what will I do for after-school care for my daughter? I'll have to find a place for her and pay for that somehow."

INTRODUCTION

The legislation's emphasis on the transition to employment from income support is progressive and useful and offers real possibilities for clients trying to make the transition. The goal of all stakeholders is to build on this foundation.

Through preparing this submission, we identified a number of main issues that are highlighted throughout the submission:

- **Getting information:** navigating the system is too difficult for clients; from the moment they are motivated they need consistent face-to-face assistance they can trust
- **The length of the transition:** a successful transition to employment requires more than 30 days; thus, files should remain open through the transition
- **Transportation:** income support clients need bus passes throughout the transition
- **Dental problems:** clients cannot make the transition without good dental health
- **Childcare:** spaces should be free to clients throughout the transition
- **Program eligibility:** employment programs target groups because of larger numbers but this is creating a barrier for some clients, specifically those between 30 and 54 who need more opportunities to prepare for employment

If an individual is not involved with a community organization, it is extremely difficult for him or her to make the transition. Community organizations are playing the necessary role of linking policies and people, thus making the goals of the legislation achievable. We have found that most issues can be resolved if contact is made with the right person. Yet making contact remains a key challenge.

This submission addresses the issues of female clients but, as service providers emphasized, there are major issues for men attempting to transition from income support to work.

After identifying issues that need addressing, we have proposed actions that HRLE might take; these follow every sub-section in the report. These proposed actions are also highlighted as recommendations in the final section of the submission.

It is our hope that a process will be put in place that allows for a response to the submissions to the Legislative Review and for a discussion on how things might move forward.

Hannah's Story

At age 58, Hannah lives in NLHC Housing with her adult son. She says:

“Is this the way I’m always going to have to live? My son is working and that should be giving me extra money but I have to hand it over to the government and they don’t need it. They give you \$10 and take back \$5. How can you get out of poverty that way? I’m living on \$7000 a year and we have no dignity. I went to the food bank for a tin of milk and they wouldn’t give it to me because I didn’t have kids so I wasn’t in need, they said. It’s pretty bad when you can’t even go out for a coffee with the girls (friends).

I did a course with WISE but it should be geared more toward careers explicitly. A lot of issues should be overhauled right now. Not a lot of people are aware of those (modifications and initiatives through HRLE). I have no transportation. With no bus pass, I am stuck in my house. I can’t go anywhere. Unless you live this life, you don’t understand it.”

FINDINGS

Question 1: Is The Direction Of The Legislation Correct?

According to one service provider: “Absolutely!” There is a general consensus that the direction of the legislation is correct, particularly in terms of supporting the transition from income support to employment. Another key informant said, “It’s good to focus on keeping income support short-term and helping people transition to work.” Service providers pointed to the “many supportive programs and initiatives,” including the new Job Start Benefit, for example.

The current approach, with programs based in legislation, was also lauded. Legislation allows for continued improvements, explained one service provider: “it’s not based on a political whim.”

There was also a consensus that gaps still exist and the initiatives, modifications and supports do not go far enough in terms of funding, program criteria, and program awareness. Many people--service providers and HRLE clients alike--see the legislation as a good start and are hopeful it will be built upon.

Question 2: What other changes or improvements should be considered for assisting individuals with finding and maintaining employment?

The following themes emerged through our research.

The Trend Towards Clients With Complicated Needs

Key informants observe that many of today’s income support clients have multiple, complex needs, more so than in the past. Because of the robust economy, many people who want jobs are employed. Programs now go “deeper into the caseload” and “those clients have more needs.” Skills development in very basic areas is required: “We (service providers) have to teach them to cook and not to smoke inside and that you don’t kick the garbage can if you’re angry.”

Key informants point to (1) mental health issues and (2) housing issues—which are often interrelated.

The shelter component of income support has not been increased in years and does not reflect the reality of the St. John’s rental market. Community organizations have clients who have been evicted because they cannot pay their rent or, increasingly, it is reported, because landlords can charge higher rents to people who are not on income support and there is a low vacancy rate.

Some HRLE clients experience temporary and longer-term homelessness. “Young people have less appropriate housing every year, housing gets more challenging every year,” say service providers. This means that clients are in constant crisis and forced to focus on a very short time frame; they cannot engage in long-term planning of any kind: “There is no way someone with kids couch surfing can think about the transition”; “How can we teach skills to someone who is homeless and dealing with getting a roof over their heads?”

Key informants say that there is insufficient support for clients living with mental illness, many of whom lack basic skills like cooking and some of whom have never worked before. Service providers say that, until recently, many members of this group might never have entered the workforce and now they are trying to do so.

Clients who have relied on income support for a long time lack confidence and self-esteem. They have lived on as little as \$7000 a year, making them socially marginalized: one service provider explains, “Some people, their self-esteem is so low; they’ll wait ‘til the end of the day to go to the supermarket so they won’t run into anyone. They’ve never worked in 30 years maybe and their literacy is low. It is unrealistic to expect them to begin a course at MUN or go to work without a lot of preparation and support. They need their confidence built up first.”

Clients are discouraged by claw-backs, such as child support: one says, “I get child support-- \$140 a month—and they deduct it off my cheque. I don’t know how that helps kids. I can’t keep up with the demand of groceries and my kids wanting stuff.” This same client earned \$300 a month as a Brighter Future Resource Mom but had \$150 of it clawed back. Another client asks: “Is this the way I’m always going to have to live? My son is working and that should be giving me extra money but I have to hand it over to the government. They give you \$10 and take back \$5. How can you get out of poverty that way? I’m living on \$7000 a year and we have no dignity.”

What Would Help

- An increase in the shelter component of income support to reflect the St. John’s rental market and the timely provision of damage deposits
- More resources and increased support for ‘soft and social skills development’
- Employee Assistance Program-type programs for people living with mental illness
- Options: an increase in basic income support rates, after many years without a raise; an increase in earnings enhancements; fewer claw-backs

The Length of the Supported Transition Period

Our research and research in the UK¹ has found that the transition from income support to employment is a long one and can be extremely challenging, particularly if a person has been in receipt of income support for a lengthy period and/or has other challenges. As our key informants explained, a person transitioning to employment is faced with the following sudden changes in their life:

- A heavily structured schedule
- Expenses they did not incur on income support, such as daily transportation
- Financial instability as they move from income support to a pay cheque
- The imperative to learn new skills, such as organizational skills, at a stressful time
- The sudden demands of multi-tasking, since household and family management needs are ongoing
- Finding childcare, in many cases, and paying for it, at least partly
- Getting children to school and/or daycare while arriving to work on time, usually while relying on public transportation

The Job Start Benefit and other initiatives support these challenges. The 30-day overlap recognizes the transition, although it is not, in practice, a full 30 days.

A successful transition takes time. One client who completed an employment program several months ago described how she is currently getting irregular shifts at a childcare centre and will be working more hours at a bed and breakfast when the tourist season begins: “Right now I’m making the same money as I did on income support because I’m only getting part-time work. I’m still struggling but that will pick up later when the summer comes.”

Most key informants said that income support files are often closed before clients have made a successful transition (given that files have to be re-opened, this is not cost-effective). There is no way to judge if a successful transition will be made within the first month of employment; some HRLE clients leave work shortly after beginning it, often because supports are insufficient. For instance, one employment program graduate was forced quit his new job because he did not have the money for bus fare. Some parents leave their jobs because they cannot afford the amounts over and above the childcare subsidy.

¹ Harries, Tim and Kandy Woodfield (2002) Easing the transition to work: A qualitative evaluation of transitional support for clients returning to employment. Norwich, UK: National Centre for Social Research for the Department of Work and Pensions, Government of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

These clients experience their attempted transitions as failure and it appears that, as a result, many will not attempt to transition in the future. It is important to support clients who are managing to move through the transition, having gotten as far as to find employment.

What Would Help

- A significant extension of the overlap period and other supports necessary to make a successful transition
- A change in policy to leave income support files open until the client has made a successful transition, perhaps measured as several months of continuous employment

Mary's Story

At 40, Mary works with a community organization.

"I wanted to go to work and I had an employer who wanted to hire me in the private sector. He was all for it. I applied for a wage subsidy and then there was ten days of nothing being done. You have to advocate. Three months later, it was the same. It was confusing, too, because you had to keep up your job search while you were waiting for the subsidy and you had to take another job if it came. The employer was waiting all this time.

Five months after I applied for the wage subsidy, I got this job. Then the subsidy came through but it was too late. The employer was pretty frustrated, too.

I'm confident and skilled but it was frustrating and it was a hard time for me. I can imagine what people are feeling without the skills and support, calling the 1-800 number and not getting someone you know and waiting for months."

Question 3: What Other Changes Or Improvements Could Be Made To Remove Barriers Or Disincentives To Participate In Employment For Individuals Receiving Income Support?

The Barrier of Beginning the Transition

It takes courage to begin the transition from income support and it takes persistence and determination to continue. Clients feel motivated but don't know where to begin. When they pick up the phone to seek information from HRLE, they experience difficulty navigating the phone system and identifying the right questions to ask. Many, especially young people, have cell phones rather than land lines and are paying for minutes used during the day; they cannot afford to stay long on the phone but find they are passed from one person to another. They have to tell their story multiple times. The system could be more user-friendly, especially for those with complex needs.

One client said she made her first inquiry almost a year ago and "is nowhere yet. It's a day's work to talk to someone at HRLE. It's hard to get through on the phone and they don't know who to refer you to." A service provider said: "When people go on income support, they should be asked right away: Where are you? Where do you want to go? What do you need? There should be counseling with a real person, someone who is skilled and can inform them about the options available to them."

Clients need consistent face-to-face assistance they can trust. In the UK, the position of Personal Advisor has been created to respond to the unique needs of clients trying to make the transition: ". . . some (clients) need encouragement to perceive employment as an option open to them and to comprehend the system such as interpreting the often complex rules and regulations related to eligibility for back-to-work benefits."² Without Personal Advisors (or something similar) there is a heavy onus on individual clients.

While some programs are clearly directed at target groups because of numbers, related program eligibility criteria can sometimes create barriers. Clients find that they are not eligible for programs that might otherwise meet their needs: "I was too old for one program because I was over 30." The highly-regarded Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) has an age requirement of 55 yet it is widely believed that younger workers could benefit from this program. Clients between 30 and 54 seem to be left out of programs that would help them transition to employment. There is a great deal of support to extend the TIOW to these clients or to develop a similar program for them. More program opportunities would help this group successfully transition to employment.

² Harries, Tim and Kandy Woodfield (2002) Easing the transition to work: A qualitative evaluation of transitional support for clients returning to employment. Norwich, UK: National Centre for Social Research for the Department of Work and Pensions, Government of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, p. 10.

What Would Help

- Consistent face-to-face assistance for clients along the lines of Personal Advisors in the UK
- A broadening of the eligibility criteria for certain programs, i.e. TIOW

Dental Health as a Barrier

The plans for an Adult Dental Health Care program are welcome. This program must provide comprehensive services to meet all the dental needs of income support clients. Dental health emerged repeatedly as one of the most significant barriers to making the transition to employment; it is a continuing challenge. Some clients have gone for many years with minimal or no dental services. Because they are missing teeth, their appearance, their self-esteem, their ability to eat a range of foods, and their overall health are jeopardized. Some clients are beyond the point of saving their teeth and need remedy in the form of dentures. In the words of one key informant, “There is no way you are going to go for a job interview if you have to cover your mouth. You’re stuck.”

What Would Help

- The provision of dental services that would lead to good dental health for all clients of HRLE, including dentures for those who need them

Transportation as a Barrier

When transportation is not a barrier, income support clients are much more able to participate in programs and to find and maintain employment. Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE) delivers the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) on Bell Island and each participant is provided with \$25 per week for transportation, which enables participation: “Transportation to St. John’s would’ve been a problem. And there are problems with the boat, too,” explains a client.

Transportation to programs and jobs within the city is beyond the abilities of many clients; most do not have their own vehicles and cannot afford bus passes, which cost \$70 per month for an adult. Transportation challenges are heightened when parents have to drop children off at daycare centres and school, especially if more than one facility is involved. It is also important to keep in mind that many clients transition into service sector jobs with low salaries; thus, they cannot expect to see their transportation prospects improve over the short- to medium-term.

What Would Help

- The provision of bus passes in St. John’s through an extended transition period

Childcare as a Barrier

In the 2011 budget, the Province introduced welcome initiatives aimed at increasing the number of available childcare spaces and a new non-refundable child care tax credit. These initiatives are seen as good beginnings.

Yet service providers and clients themselves say that childcare remains a barrier to making the transition. There are few spaces available in St. John's, especially on short notice as wait lists at some centres are months long. Said one client who plans to begin a program in September: "As soon as I find daycare. . .right now the big obstacle is daycare."

The child care subsidy does not reflect the high costs of child care services in the St. John's market; full-time childcare costs at least \$700 a month in one centre and more in others. Tax credits do not address this for people on low incomes.

Some parents making the transition do not understand that there will be a shortfall for which they are responsible, and they cannot afford it anyway. One client pulled her child out of childcare after a month when she received a bill for \$200 (over and above what the subsidy paid) and could not pay it. Service providers all have stories of clients forced to quit their jobs—most of which are low-paying—because they cannot pay childcare bills.

What Would Help

- A rise in the childcare subsidy to cover the actual costs of childcare in the St. John's market or free spaces for clients making the transition

Lack of Awareness of Programs and Initiatives

Service providers and clients alike recognize that HRLE has spearheaded many worthwhile initiatives since the legislation was introduced. Potential employers and potential employees are eager to take advantage of these initiatives; 12-week wage subsidies, for instance, give employers the opportunity to get to know an employee without committing to them and without bearing the full cost of employment. Many subsidized employees are offered continued employment after subsidies end but there is a lack of awareness about subsidies and other supports. Said one service provider: "The subsidy *got the job*. But the employers had less knowledge about it than the participants did. I had to explain it in great detail with breakdowns of the costs to them in writing. Even local governments are unaware of the programs out there."

Some community organizations are well-placed to match subsidies, employers and clients. But it seems to be extremely difficult for an individual client and a potential employer to navigate the system and get results. A 40 year-old former client said: "I had an employer who wanted to hire me in the private sector. He was all for it. I applied for a wage subsidy and then there was ten days of nothing being done. Three months later, it was the same. The employer was waiting all this time. Five months after I applied for the wage subsidy, I got this (other) job. Then the

subsidy came through but it was too late. The employer was pretty frustrated, too.” The potential employer will not likely pursue a subsidy in future and there is also the danger he will discourage others from doing so.

In addition, many clients on income support remain unaware of other HRLE supports, including the Job Start Benefit, the 30-day overlap, the enhanced earnings exemption, and so on. From this and other research projects, we know that large numbers of clients still believe that “you will lose your drug card if you go to work”, “you will be cut off social assistance if you go to school”, etc. These beliefs are based on the experiences of friends and neighbours dating back several years. The informal network remains the most valued source of information, whether or not the information conveyed through it is current and valid. With the right information spread through the network, more people will be able to take advantage of available supports. In fact, success stories spread through the informal network quite quickly and effectively. Said one recent graduate of an employment program: “My friend was in it last year and she told me about it. I thought about it. And my cousin enrolled. So I did, too.”

One older client linked lack of awareness to marginalization in general: “Not a lot of people are aware of those (modifications and initiatives through HRLE). I have no transportation. With no bus pass, I am stuck in my house. I can’t go anywhere. Unless you live this life, you don’t understand it.”

What Would Help

- A campaign to generate awareness of existing programs, supports and their benefits, aimed at HRLE clients and potential employers
- Simplification of the Poverty Reduction Strategy’s Programs and Services booklet

Natalie's Story

Age 28, Natalie is the mother of a school-age child and a preschooler. She says:

"My problem is getting schooling. I plan to start ABE at the Murphy Centre in September. I tried it at the College of the North Atlantic before I had my second child and I left; I didn't like the curriculum. My way of learning is I need teacher-led, not self-study. One good thing was I had transportation; I was supplied with a bus pass. And you get free tuition and books for ABE. I don't need too many credits to finish it. As soon as I find daycare. . .right now the big obstacle is daycare.

I have a meeting in June with the Murphy Centre and someone at the Career Work Centre. I have to apply for a daycare subsidy, too. That's out in Mount Pearl. There's lots of running around. I have no car or bus pass so my father is going to take me around.

I want to be a construction electrician; I want to be a tradesperson. There are lots of different initiatives in the trades, especially for women. Everything I can do for free, I do it. I did Essential Skills and Access to Careers with WISE and we learned how we have transferable skills like organizing and scheduling from things we do in our everyday lives.

For me to get a job now with no education, I wouldn't be able to survive. There's no way. Luckily, I'm in (City of St. John's) Housing and rent is low but as soon as I get a job it will go up. Until I get an education there's not any point working. I'd have less than I started with. Most people are getting minimum wage so there's not much incentive to work.

I heard about them (the modifications and initiatives through HRLE) through other people's experience. I heard about the earnings exemption but I haven't seen it in practice with anyone. I was told it was higher. The drug program being for all low income now, that will help a lot. That's a really good idea. Parents who needed asthma drugs for their kids had to quit their jobs right away."

CONCLUSION

The following recommendations would put income support clients in a position to begin to seriously consider the possibility of transitioning to employment.

Clients' Standard of Living

These recommendations would increase the standard of living and meet some of their pressing health needs, thereby bringing them up on the hierarchy of needs and reducing the likelihood of crises that stall the transition.

1. An increase in the shelter component of income support to reflect the St. John's rental market and the timely provision of damage deposits
2. Options: an increase in basic income support rates, after many years without a raise; an increase in earnings enhancements; fewer claw-backs
3. The provision of dental services that would lead to good dental health for all clients of HRLE

Awareness of Options

These recommendations would help clients learn about available options for training and employment as well as existing supports:

4. Consistent face-to-face assistance for clients along the lines of Personal Advisors in the UK
5. A campaign to generate awareness of existing programs, supports and their benefits, aimed at HRLE clients and potential employers – to be effective this will require human resources and ongoing personal interactions
6. Simplification of the Poverty Reduction Strategy's Programs and Services booklet

Program Effectiveness

These recommendations would enhance the effectiveness of employment programs:

7. More resources and increased support for 'soft and social skills development'
8. A broadening of the eligibility criteria for certain programs, i.e. TIOW
9. Employee Assistance Program-type programs for people living with mental illness

Successful Transitions

These recommendations would increase the chances of a successful transition from income support to employment:

10. A significant extension of the overlap period and other supports necessary to make a successful transition
11. A change in policy to leave income support files open until the client has made a successful transition, perhaps measured as several months of continuous employment

Overcoming Barriers

These recommendations would remove barriers that prevent a successful transition to employment:

12. The provision of bus passes in St. John's through an extended transition period
13. A rise in the childcare subsidy to cover the actual costs of childcare in the St. John's market or free spaces for clients making the transition

Overarching Issue

There remains a continuing and significant need for more face-to-face and one-on-one connections between clients or potential clients and HRLE staff or others who can provide personalized support. From CSC experiences with many programs offered over the years and currently through CSC's Public Access and Vibrant Communities, we know that personal support makes a significant difference in people's lives. The ability to communicate with the same supportive person seems to streamline services for people. We therefore recommend that there be easily accessible points of contact and referral established. These services should work in tandem with existing services to ensure greater knowledge of and greater access to existing programs. This will build on the Programs and Services booklet to assist those who are not able to fully use a written document or online service.

Barbara's Story

Barbara took part in the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers after many years on income support. She says:

"It was very interesting and I learned a lot. The program was really helpful and I enjoyed everything about it. Working in groups was good, we did a lot of that. Learning how to cope with problems, think about it and don't jump to conclusions—that was helpful. Doing resumes, that was the first time I ever did one. After that, I didn't mind walking into a place and giving my resume.

I thought I was too old to do this program but I had a lot of family support. My children told me to go for it. My friend was in it last year and she told me about it. I thought about it. And my cousin enrolled. So I did, too.

Now I am training at the local bed and breakfast. I'm only getting a few hours but it will pick up the summer when the tourists come. I applied for a daycare job here on Bell Island but they weren't hiring but they took me on as a substitute and I have a shift there tomorrow.

Right now I'm making the same money as I did on income support because I'm only getting part-time work. I'm struggling but that will pick up later when the summer comes."

APPENDIX I

WISE on Bell Island: Target Initiative for Older Workers Case Study

In 2010 Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE) delivered the Target Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) on Bell Island; the leadership of the organization responded to transportation needs on the island by recognizing the program had to be brought to clients. Clients were highly motivated: “Everyone wanted a job; they were desperate not to be on income support again.”

Participants:

- 14 women over 55, some of whom were on income support, most of whom had low literacy levels, some of whom had never been employed before

Goals:

- Credentials that would be recognized in the workplace
- Improvements in the use of technology
- Skills and abilities in marketing to employers
- Strengthening of participants’ networks with others in the community
- Heightened awareness of supports, opportunities and resources available to them
- Increased use of employment supports, such as wage subsidies, networking, etc.
- Strengthened confidence levels through goal-setting, sharing and learning within a group setting

Outcomes:

- 100% graduation rate, followed by part- or full-time employment for each graduate
- Eight skills development certificates for each participant (some of whom had never received certificates in their lives)
- A high-level tourism brochure on Bell Island produced by the group, which was presented to and well-received by the Town Council
- A small crafts business owned by a graduate with a disability
- Engagement as citizens, e.g., participants regularly attend Town Council meetings and volunteer at events such as Accordion Idol

What was key:

- Wage subsidies
- Making community development on Bell Island a central part of the program

What didn't work:

- Promotion through written materials, i.e., posters

What did work:

- The emphasis on community development
- Promotion through the informal network of friends, relatives, and neighbours
- One-on-one recruitment of participants
- Weekly transportation allowance for participants
- Weekly participant allowance
- Group activities and programming
- WISE's in-house capacity and ability to directly link subsidies with employers
- One-on-one meetings with employers to explain available subsidies, using detailed charts breaking down costs and subsidies for 20, 30 and 40 hours of weekly work; "employers felt appreciated and they said 'thank you' for including us"

What other supports would help:

- Follow-up sessions after job placements to offer continuous up-skilling; a funded pilot project: "It's easy to slack off without any follow-up."
- A resource centre for graduates to help maintain their new support system and promote community development, e.g., guest speakers from NLOWE, Red Hat Society events, etc.
- Continued financial support for transportation
- A broadening of the TIOW criteria to include workers under 55