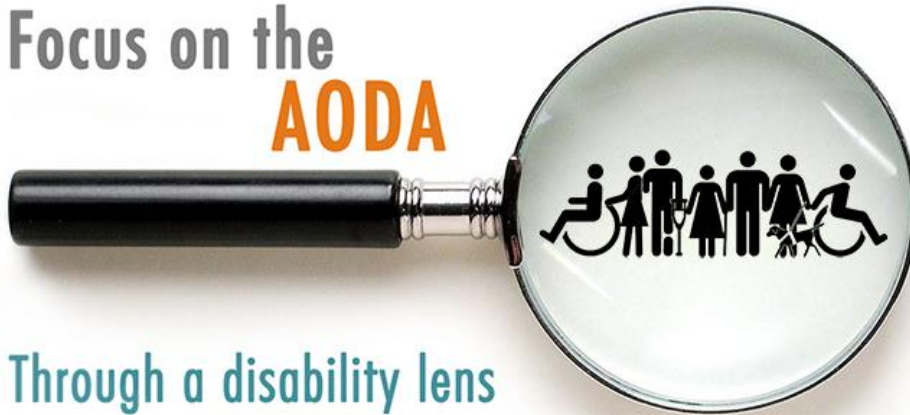


Focus on the
AODA

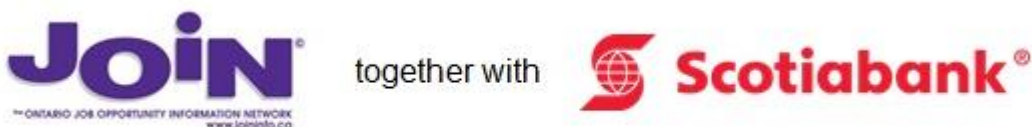


Through a disability lens

Highlights from JOIN's 11th Annual Employer Conference

JOIN - The Ontario Job Opportunity Information Network held its 11th Annual Employer Conference "Focus on the AODA – Through a Disability Lens" on December 01 at the Sheraton Downtown Toronto Hotel to kick off the week celebrating the UN International Day for People with Disabilities. The event sold out this year and attendees were educated and updated on the established requirements of the AODA (Access to Ontarians with Disabilities Act) for Ontario employers in areas such as: customer service, information and communication, employment, transportation, procurements and built design. Delegates were able to network and connect and learn about legislation, best practices, and take away tools, tips and resources to be able to design inclusive policies, practices and environments for employees and customers with disabilities.

In addition to the workshop topic experts and panelists, delegates were able to hear from excellent keynote speakers and dignitaries from government and corporate Canada.



We want to acknowledge our Title Sponsor for the sixth year, Scotiabank and all of our sponsors and partners this year.

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Highlights for the day included:

The morning's activities began with MC, Suhana Meharchand, CBC Newsworld News Anchor and Host of the CBC News Now welcoming everyone with her spontaneous and humourous wit. Suhana shared personal stories about her inability to access buildings, restaurants and how very important the day's topic was to us all especially as we age.



An animated Suhana with the interpreter



The Audience

Suhana then introduced Marie-France Lalonde, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure (Economic Development) who brought morning welcoming comments from Hon. Brad Duguid, MPP, Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Marie-France apologized to the audience for the Minister's inability to attend and shared insights into the importance of the AODA legislation and how proud Ontario is to be the first province to legislate compliance for the five standards and reinforced the importance of effective workforce and provincial infrastructure to support more employment for persons with disabilities and for all of us in the province.



Marie-France Lalonde speaks while an interpreter signs

Suhana thanked Ms. Lalonde and gave her a gift from one of JOIN's annual employer awardees – SIGNS Restaurant.

Suhana then introduced the Executive Dignitary on behalf of the Title Sponsor, Scotiabank. Islay McGlynn, Senior Vice-President, Employee Experience welcomed all delegates to the conference and spoke about how important the JOIN conference was to Scotiabank. This was the sixth year that Scotiabank was the Title Sponsor for the event. Some of her comments: "Having a workforce that truly represents our diversity in Canada is crucial, and it's just one part of the equation. As employers, we know that hiring people with disabilities– is about tapping into a resource of skilled and diverse talent because it makes business sense. At Scotiabank, we've adopted the *Accessibility of Ontarian's with Disabilities Act (AODA)* standards and we have developed plans to implement them in our offices and branches across Canada. Our Accessibility Plan outlines what we'll do to remove and prevent accessibility barriers in our organization for customers and for employees. The other part of the equation is how we support employees through inclusive practices. Inclusion is about creating a positive and rewarding experience at every stage in an employee's career."



Islay McGlynn speaks to the delegates

Next on the agenda, Suhana offered a warm welcome to Hon. Jean Augustine, Honorary Member of JOIN Board of Governors and Fairness Commissioner for Ontario. With her usual vitality and enthusiasm Ms. Augustine welcomed all delegates on behalf of JOIN and thanked them on behalf of the Board of Directors for their ongoing commitment to JOIN and particularly thanked the Ontario Public Service for partnering again with JOIN for the third year on the conference and in her role as Fairness Commissioner echoed Islay's thoughts on fairness and equity for all Ontarians.



Hon. Jean Augustine with the interpreter

Suhana thanked Ms. Augustine and made several announcements regarding the day's activities and asked delegates to make their way to the morning workshops. The morning workshops included:

Workshop 1 – Towards an Accessible Ontario

Towards an Accessible Ontario - Ontario is one of the first jurisdictions in the world to move to a modern regulatory regime that mandates accessibility and reporting. With the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Ontario has become a global leader in accessibility for people with disabilities. The session will also highlight creative education and outreach strategies that raise public awareness of the importance of accessibility and educate business owners on their requirements under the AODA. Attendees will be able to browse and take-away some practical resources aimed to help organizations make their business practices more accessible.

The session will feature the unique process used to develop the accessibility standards – a process that applied citizen engagement to create sound social policy. The session will describe the OPS's substantial and continuing journey toward creating an accessible and inclusive workplace. The obligation goes beyond complying with the law; it is about a responsibility to model compliance and lead by example.



Speaker - Alfred Spencer, Director, Outreach and Strategic Initiatives Branch, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario – Image Above

Workshop 2 – Global Team Engagement Strategies

Global Team Engagement Strategies – From the Boardroom to the Business Units

As a large global organization with over a century of history in making the world a smarter place, hear how IBM has made a commitment to Make Accessibility Happen from the Boardroom and C Suite to the procurement, learning and training teams to the customer service business units, not only within IBM but with all of its business partners.



Speakers - Rukhsana R. Syed, Diversity and Compliance Leader, IBM Canada Ltd.; Dan Shire, Usability and Information Architecture, Accessibility Team Lead (GBS Canada). – Images Above

Workshop 3 – Accessibility Realities and Checkpoints by “Mystery Shoppers”

Auditing Your Own Organization – Starwood Hotels and Resorts Canada

Canada’s leading hotel and resort chain have implemented many strategies for guests and employees around accessibility and inclusion. Hear what Starwood has completed and how they utilized “Mystery Shoppers with Disabilities” to create a report on the Moments of Truth for their flagship hotel by reaching out to every point of contact to assess the realities for guests and employees.



Speakers - Moderator – Sharon Myatt, Ontario JOIN; Panelists, Erin Haid, Starwood Hotels and Resorts Canada; Mystery Shopper – Pina D’Intino – Image above.

Workshop 4 – Unique to Know Best Practices

Unique to Know Best Practices – Learn about best practices in recruitment, training, onboarding, upward mobility and retention from two very unique and different organizations.



Speakers (from left to right)- Christine Nelson, Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf, Stacey Connor, CHS; Anjan Manikumar, Owner, Signs Restaurant, (restaurant employer with 38 deaf employees); Sandra Corelli, National Director and HRBP, Canadian Personal and Commercial Distribution, BMO – images above.

After lunch and networking, Suhana welcomed everyone back and introduced luncheon dignitary, representing the Ontario Public Service (partner for the event), Hon. David Oraziotti, MPP, Minister of Government and Consumer Services. The Minister spoke about how pleased his Ministry was to again join forces for the day with JOIN for the third year as a partner and how he hoped that today all delegates would leave with more knowledge and tools to support the province in ensuring inclusion.



Hon. David Oraziotti speaks to the delegates

Suhana returned to the podium to introduce Michael Gottheil, Executive Chair of the Social Justice Tribunals Ontario, a cluster of seven adjudicative tribunals, with jurisdiction ranging from human rights, to residential tenancies, social benefits and disability support, special education and child protection oversight. He previously served as Chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, and as Executive Chair of the Environment and Land Tribunals Ontario, Luncheon Keynote Speaker.

Michael's tremendous sense of humour gave the audience insights into his life as a person who is blind and shared heartfelt, humorous and frustrating moments during his life and career where he experienced lack of inclusion and frustration and some amazing antidotes and quotes from important people in his life. His keynote address was thought provoking, humorous, and we all took away some new "words and phrases" from his presentation like "the pot luck reference", "the conundrum of disability", and "inspirational porn".

Michael received a 4.8 out of a possible 5 points from the audience and excellent comments from all in his evaluation and feedback summary.



Luncheon keynote speaker Michael Gottheil

Deepak Soni, Chair of JOIN Board of Directors presented the 2014 JOIN Annual Business Achievement Awards. Proud recipients were:



Employer of the Year – SIGNS Restaurant



Employer of the Year – AGI Shorewood Group

Annual Leadership in Accessibility Award - CISCO

Delegates then made their way to the afternoon workshops which included:

Workshop 1.1 – Making Employment Practices More Accessible in Ontario

Making Employment Practices More Accessible in Ontario – Workshop for Employers on the AODA Employment Standard.

The workshop will translate new regulations into concrete HR practices that promote accessible employment. At this workshop, you will learn about the business case for inclusive and accessible workplaces, hear about practical HR strategies, policies, and take away tools that meet and exceed the Accessibility Standard for Employment.

The Conference Board of Canada will share high level overviews of two toolkits for employers - Business Benefits of Accessible Workplaces (2014) and Employers' Toolkit: Making Ontario Workplaces Accessible to People with Disabilities (2012)



Speakers – Ruth Wright, , Director, Leadership and Human Resources Research, Conference Board of Canada; Richard Brisbois, Senior Research Associate, Conference Board of Canada – Images Above.

Workshop 2.1 – Designing Inclusive and Accessible Information and Communication

If you can't apply it, it's just noise...

There has been a lot of noise and even more said about how the lack of credible and trusted resources and skills in accessibility has impeded organizations in their mission to achieve an accessible and inclusive goal and vision. Capacity building is essential for any organization to effectively achieve implementation of their programs. So how are organizations creating capacity to adopt accessibility and inclusion practices? How are they engaging and applying regulations such as the AODA?

Learn how regulations like the AODA access to information and communication standards have influenced changes in formal education and learning programs around the world; how new initiatives in accessibility and inclusion will contribute to trusted skills development that leads to capacity building. Hear how organizations can effectively develop technical and policy enablers, (including research, case studies, examples and model practices), from ground up to adoption to achieve sustainable cultural and attitudinal changes that in turn lead to systemic changes that empower everyone to reach their full potential.



Speakers - Pina D'Intino, Senior Manager, Enabling Solutions and Support Management, Moderator of Panel, Scotiabank; Jutta Treviranus, Director, Inclusive Design and Research Centre, OCAD University; Karen Lablans, Senior Manager, Employee Relations, Scotiabank; Jan Richards, Project Manager, OCAD University – Images Above.

Workshop 3.1 – Our Built Environment: Building Code and Public Spaces

What can you do to create an accessible business and community? What Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements apply to you under the design of public spaces standard?

This panel presentation will highlight key resources and discuss the relationship between various laws concerning the built environment.

The presentation will:

- Demystify the relationship between the AODA and the Building Code
- Explain the responsibilities of builders, property owners and tenants
- Provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and get answers

The session will equip you with the tools and knowledge you need to meet your obligations under the AODA and the Ontario Building Code.



Speakers – Moderator of Panel - Debbie Strauss, Director of Accessible Program Design and Delivery Branch, Ministry of Government and Consumer Services; Darren Cooney, Manager Public Education and Partnerships, Accessibility Directorate of Ontario; Chris Thompson, Manager, Building Code Policy Development Unit. – Images Above.

Workshop 4.1 – **OPS Inclusion Lens**

Focus on the OPS Inclusion Lens

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) is moving to the “how” of inclusion by asking the right questions so we can ensure our services and workplace are inclusive, including to persons with disabilities. The OPS Inclusion Lens is a powerful tool that is helping to embed key principles of inclusion in the work of the Ontario government.

Join us for this 90-minute workshop which will provide the context of Inclusion (addressing multiple dimensions of diversity, including accessibility) in the OPS, introduce you to the tool, and provide a practical overview of how the tool can be used to bring attention to real or potential barriers to accessibility in programs and processes and how they can be addressed.

Award winning virtual tool.



Speaker – Kim Dobson – Lead, OPS Inclusion Lens – Image Above.

Suhana welcomed everyone back and introduced closing keynote speaker, Naki Osutei.

Naki is currently Director, Public Affairs and Social Legacy for the Organizing Committee of the TORONTO 2015 Pan Am and ParaPan Am Games. In this role she leads the corporate accessibility, diversity, inclusion strategies. She was previously Director, Human Resources and Diversity & Inclusion where she was responsible for the recruitment and employee relations for half the organization. Naki spoke about the efforts TORONTO2015 has undertaken to use the Games to build greater awareness of accessibility. Naki also showed two commercials that are now showing on television in preparation for the Games.



Closing keynote speaker Naki Osutei

Deepak Soni, Chair of the Board of Directors of the JOIN Board, offered closing comments and thanked all of the wonderful volunteers, our speakers, workshop facilitators and panelists and Suhana for a wonderful day and especially thanked the Conference Committee and the JOIN team.

Surveys were circulated and completed at the end of the day and at the end of all workshops. Here is a sampling of the results:

97% answered yes to the question, “As a result of the day’s activities, do you feel better prepared to support an individual with a disability in the workplace?”

95% answered yes to the question, “Would you recommend this conference to a colleague next year?”

92% answered yes to the question, “Did this event increase your awareness and offer you more insights into the benefits of the AODA and how it will impact your business?”

Workshop Ratings – out of a possible 5 points.

Workshop ratings averaged 4 to 4.7 out of a possible 5 points.

JOIN wishes to extend its sincerest appreciation to all members of the Conference Steering Committee this year.

Richard Belzile, Ontario Public Service

David Best, Consultant

Erica Fuhr, Jazz Aviation

Sheldon Ens, Ontario Public Service

Christine Zannier, BMO

Lauri Sue Robertson, Disability Awareness Consultants

Aviva Kapelus, Ontario Public Service

Carla Boose, Scotiabank

Members of the JOIN Team