

# SHELTERED WORKSHOPS

## People First of Canada

# HELP WANTED REAL WORK FOR REAL PAY

## Nothing About Us Without Us!

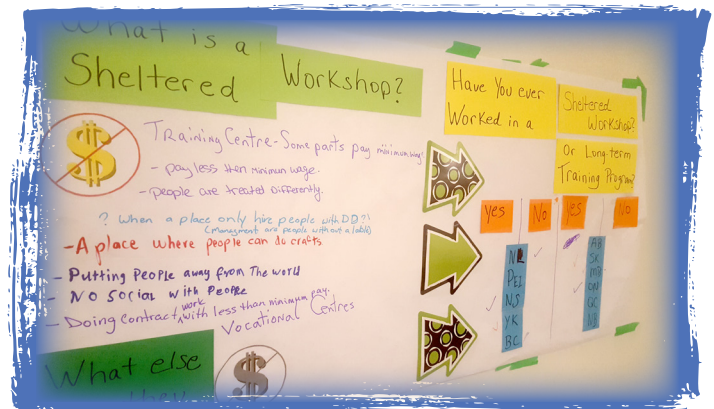
For People First of Canada, this statement means that nobody else can make any decisions about our lives without us being part of that. It means that we speak for ourselves and other people whose voices are not heard. One issue we speak up about is working and having a job.

## Employment and Sheltered Workshops

**Sheltered workshops** are places where people labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability might work. These are places where they are segregated or separated. People are not paid fairly for the work they do. These are sometimes known by other names such as Employment Training Centres or Adult Service Centres or Long-term Training Centres.

**Sheltered work programs** happen in workplaces in the community. But labeled people do not work equally with non-labeled people in these programs. They still do not get paid fairly for the work they do.

Employment rules are different all across Canada. Most provinces and territories have employment standards. But even then there are legal ways for employers to get around that. They can still have sheltered work programs. They can do this if they call their programs 'training' instead of 'work.' But for many people, this 'training' can last their whole working life.



## A RECENT SURVEY SHOWED THAT MANY PEOPLE SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN THESE WORKSHOPS AND PROGRAMS.

**37%** spent between two and five years

**26%** spent between five and ten years

**21%** spent between ten and twenty years

Survey by the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (2021). Help Wanted—Ending Sheltered Work in Canada: Transitioning to Inclusive Employment for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

## The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In 2006, the United Nations made a treaty called the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention states that people with disabilities have the right to be treated equally, just like everyone else. Canada signed the Convention in 2010 and agreed to follow it.

Article 27 of the Convention is about Work and Employment. The very first line states, "We recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others." Sheltered workshops and programs violate and go against this article of the Convention.

## Key issues with Sheltered Workshops and Programs.

- ✓ People work isolated and away from the rest of society.
- ✓ People do not get paid a fair wage.
- ✓ People do not often get to leave these programs and get a job in the regular workforce.
- ✓ People who work in these programs are treated unfairly or exploited.

# REAL WORK FOR REAL PAY MEANS BEING VALUED AND BEING PAID FAIRLY

“ For myself, I got out of school and no one was really wanting to hire me. In my first job – I was so naïve, and I didn’t know what I was getting myself into. I felt used. I put washers on screws, and made wooden stakes and what I learned was that the wages were \$3 a week. I was there for 4 or 5 years before I went out and tried to find other work. I had help from friends and eventually got a job as a janitor for \$10 an hour – really good in 1980. I’m retired now with a good pension and enjoying life.

— Gordon Fletcher (Past President of People First of Canada) ”



## CALL TO ACTION!

### You can support Real Work for Real Pay in a number of ways.

- ✓ Demand employers hire a diverse workforce and offer accommodations if needed.
- ✓ Support the work of Ready, Willing and Able. This is an employment program with Inclusion Canada. Find out about becoming a more inclusive employer. Visit their website at [www.readywillingable.ca/](http://www.readywillingable.ca/)
- ✓ Write to your elected officials and tell them that you want to see changes to the law in your province. You can find templates for letters on our website.

People First of Canada provides information and resources to help address the issue of sheltered workshops in Canada.

 **Visit our website to learn more**  
[www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca](http://www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca)



### What do labeled people need to be successful employees?

Labeled people need support, real training, and someone to believe in them.

Our goal is to see People First members employed fairly in jobs they enjoy where they can use their skills in the community.

### Is it possible to change the workplace?

*Yes it is!*

Help us end Sheltered Workshops and support people to find meaningful employment.

People First of Canada is the national organization representing people labeled with an intellectual or developmental disability. We work together to educate and influence communities and government to ensure that all persons with intellectual disabilities are fully included and supported to live as equal citizens in Canada.

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