

**Final Report  
for  
Labour Education and Research Network**

By Design or by Default?  
Women's Labour Market Training Needs  
and the Role of Community-based Training

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# **By Design or by Default? Women's Labour Market Training Needs and the Role of Community-based Training**

## **Summary**

The unique and important labour market training needs of women in Canada have been formally recognised in policy since 1986, when Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women endorsed 19 measures aimed at enhancing women's education and training opportunities. This study examines what has happened since 1998, focusing in particular on the impact of implementation of Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) on services to women and on the Community-based Training sector. Our research concludes that LMDAs have not succeeded in meeting some important needs. We argue that the current policy lens is too narrow to encompass an accurate view of women's labour market training needs and suggest that a comprehensive livelihoods perspective would improve the situation and enhance the potential for policy impact and program effectiveness. Results of our research also suggest that the Community Based Training sector is an effective delivery mechanism for meeting the particular training needs of women. In Ontario, there is an opportunity to re-think and re-design and to draw upon the developed capacity and skills of a number of women's CBT organizations that have managed to survive in the policy vacuum created by delays in establishing a provincial LMDA.

## **By Design or by Default? Women's Labour Market Training Needs and the Role of Community-based Training**

### **Introduction**

This is the final report for a research project carried out with the support of the Labour Education and Research Network at the Centre for Research on Work and Society, York University, Toronto, Canada. The project was carried out in response to a request for proposals for project on 'the role of Community Based Training (CBT) in the provision of training and its place in Canada's training system'. The goal of this project was to examine the current situation with respect to CBT as a vehicle for women's training. Our focus was on Ontario, drawing as well on experiences of CBT in British Columbia and Quebec. One outcome of the research, in addition to this report was contribution of a chapter entitled "*Still Shopping for Training: Women, Training and Livelihoods*" to **Training the Excluded for Work**, a forthcoming book edited by Marjorie Griffith Cohen. Earlier versions of some sections of this report appear in that chapter.

The research project was designed to build upon previous work in this area. The need for specific policy measures and implementation strategies designed to meet the particular needs of women with respect to labour market training has been recognised since at least 1986, when Federal and Provincial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women jointly endorsed *Towards a Labour Force Strategy: A Framework for Training for Women*. In 1993, in an effort to further advance implementation of a training strategy for women, a federal-provincial-territorial Working Group was formed and was given the mandate to identify principles, models and best practices for training for women. One result of their work was the publication of our study, *Meeting Women's Training Needs: Case Studies in Women's Training*, (1994). Later, in 1998, in a review of events which had taken place since the 1994 report, we noted that the political and economic context for labour market training had continued to shift in important ways, resulting in changes to and, in some cases, disappearance of programs. The models and best practices identified in the 1994 study, however, were still of value. While the policy context and resource base for programs supporting women's training had changed, women's needs and interests had not (Lior and Wismer, 1998).

According to a recent Ontario-based study, concerns about an increasing divergence between women's labour market training needs and interests, and available programs and resources continue. The study states that "programmes have been lost, service levels are decreasing, and access is diminished" (ACTEW, 2000, 4). The importance of women's current and potential contribution to the labour force, however, has not diminished in any way. The social capital concerns which motivated the Federal and Provincial Ministers in 1986 and 1993 are as valid now as they were then; as are the needs and interests of women across the country who want to find meaningful, safe and secure work in order to provide for themselves and their families (Gunderson, M., 1998; Status of Women Canada, 2001.) Women's contribution to the Canadian economy has been calculated in a variety of contested ways. Whatever means are used, however, the conclusion is

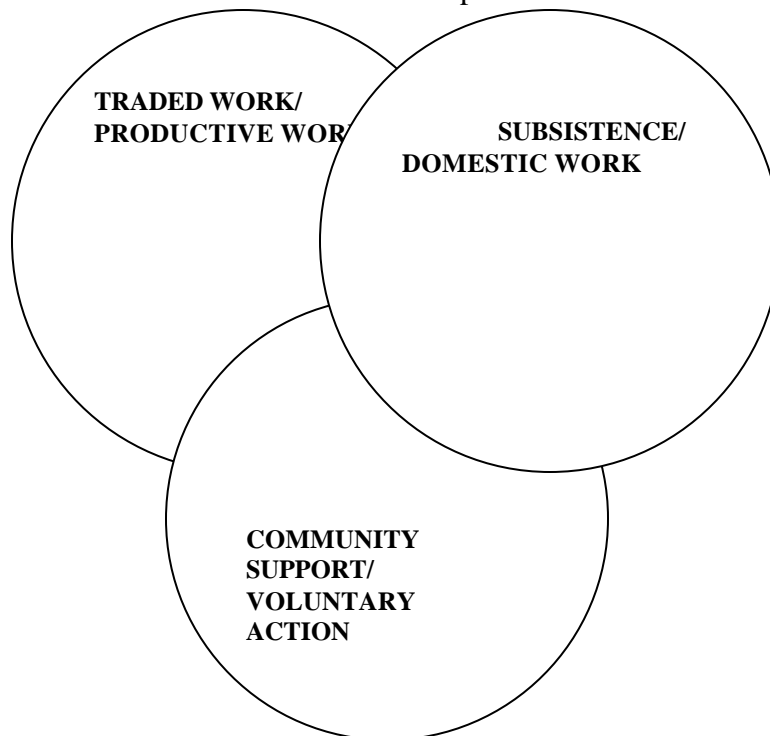
always that women's current contribution is typically underestimated and that women's potential contribution continues to be hampered by structural barriers (Wismer, 1997, Statistics Canada, 1995).

This research, then, follows from our 1998 work. Our starting position with respect to policy development has been that training alone cannot solve structural problems. However, training can make an important contribution to the dismantling of barriers currently keeping women away from the work that they need (ACTEW, 2000). Among various providers of training, Community-based Trainers (CBT) have been widely recognised for their flexibility, adaptability and effectiveness (Canadian Coalition of Community-based Training, 1997; Critoph, U. 1997; Human Resources Development Canada/ Canadian Coalition of Community-based Training, 1995).

### **A Livelihoods Perspective on Training:**

The theoretical perspective guiding the research has been based on the concept of sustainable livelihood. The livelihoods perspective draws on two main sources: work done in other settings on sustainable livelihoods as an approach to understanding and analyzing relationships between people and the environment which supports them (see for example, Walker et al., 2001, Carney et al, 2000, Redclift, 2000); and frameworks developed for gender analysis and gender research ( see for example, Levy, 1998, Moser, 1993). While the idea of sustainable livelihoods has been used most frequently in the context of overseas development, our position is that it is equally applicable to the Canadian situation.

Figure 1: A Sustainable Livelihoods Perspective



Traded work/Productive work includes jobs and all productive activities carried out in order to generate income, or for trade or barter.

Subsistence activities/ Domestic work are carried out in order to provide goods or services to family or community members. This includes all `non-traded' work done in the home and childcare, as well as the production and processing of products for home use e.g. sewing, cooking, canning, gardening.

Community support activities/ Voluntary action includes political, religious, cultural, social organisational activities and community-based resource management activities. This may be individual acts of neighbourliness, such as taking a meal to a sick friend or picking up litter in a public park; or more formal organized work, such as participation in a service club, coming out for annual `clean the stream' days, etc.

Each type of livelihood activity supports the others. Each type is real `work' and is essential to the well-being of individuals, households and communities. Quality of life is based on the balanced and mutually supportive nature of the relationship among the three areas of work. Changes in one area affect others. Sustainability lies in the area of overlap at the centre and implies a balanced (not necessarily equal) relationship among the three areas.

From a policy and program perspective, a focus on one area (for example employment-related training designed to assist people to improve their level or type of access to traded work) cannot exclude the broader view of the whole livelihood system and needs to take into account the importance of all three types of livelihood activities to individuals, households and communities. Further, analyses of the impact of policies or programs need to be integrated, so that impacts are assessed across all three areas.

For example, one explanation for the extremely long workdays of women in many countries, including Canada, is that, for various reasons, the need to engage in income-generating activities is increasing steadily. At the same time, the number of hours of domestic work necessary to manage households is only elastic up to a certain point, with the amount of elasticity, in part, determined by income. Similarly, but less visibly, there are certain minimum levels of community support work that are necessary in order to create and allow for income-generating activities and to support the well-being of households and communities.

In general then, we assume that any livelihood strategy (including training for women) must take into account the necessary nature of all three major areas of livelihood activity. A focus on any one area (e.g. income generation) without examining impacts and effects on others is likely to lead to significant unanticipated negative outcomes. In other research, we have stressed that an understanding of livelihood is based on an analysis of impacts and effects which are historical, political/legal, social, cultural, psychological, environmental (in the biophysical sense), as well as economic. In any individual

situation, some of these factors will be less important than others; however, a simple focus on any single factor will never yield adequate understanding (Walker et al., 2000; Wismer, 2002).

While detailed sustainable livelihood analysis at the program level was well beyond the scope of this research, the general theoretical perspective offered by the sustainable livelihoods concept has been of considerable use to us in assessing the current and emerging situation with respect to women's training needs and the role of CBT.

### **The Policy Context: Development of Labour Market Development Agreements in Canada**

Since our last review of the situation in 1998, a key change at the policy level has taken place. That change is the development and implementation of Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA) in most jurisdictions in Canada.

In 1996 the federal government created new legislation to govern the use of unemployment insurance funds. The new Act, the Employment Insurance Act (EI), repealed the National Training Act and changed the ways EI (formerly Unemployment Insurance) funds were to be used. At the same time an offer was made to all the provinces and territories to transfer the responsibility for delivering training and employment programs from federal to provincial or territorial jurisdiction. By 2002, agreements detailing how these funds are to be used have been negotiated and signed in every jurisdiction with the exception of Ontario.

All of the agreements have, at this stage, gone through a formative evaluation and some are about to undergo their summative evaluations. What we know, from *The Monitoring and Assessment Reports* is that women are not participating in the programs and services offered through the LMDAs at the same rate as women are reflected in the numbers of the unemployed and the contingent work force. In general, in all three years examined, 1997, 98 and 99, women's participation remained between 42 to 43% of all those receiving interventions. Although reporting on the designated groups is part of the LMDA evaluation framework, the data collection approach used made it difficult to accurately assess participation as people were expected to self-identify. In all three years, data collection was seen as a challenge. There is a lack of gender- analysis in the LMDA reporting and no discussion on how the changes in delivery impacted on women's participation or on women's programming, although HRDC staff noted that there were gaps in the area of day care services. The reports make no mention of specific barriers women face or of programmatic approaches to overcome those barriers through LMDA programs and services. Positive results are solely analysed based on savings to the EI account and employment statistics as clients finish their intervention. There are no targets for the designated groups. In addition, in the majority of jurisdictions contracting is handled through bidding and community-based trainers are often not part of the "loop", making it difficult for the sector to continue to deliver viable programs (Siskind-Bradley, 2002).

Changes in eligibility criteria, (increased number of part-times hours and increased number of weeks needed to qualify for EI) have led to fewer women qualifying for benefits. According to a recent publication by the Canadian Labour Congress only 32% of women are receiving EI benefits. The report states, "Almost all of the job growth in the '90's was part-time work, and 80% of part-time jobs are filled by women. But the new Employment Insurance system ignores the labour market realities of women as well as their family responsibilities." (Canadian Labour Congress, 2002, p.2). Overall, 42% of men compared to 32% of eligible women are receiving benefits (Canadian Labour Congress, UI Bulletin, April 2002).

In connection with this research project, one of the authors of this report attended a recent conference (February 2002 organized by the Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN) and hosted by the Government of Alberta. The conference examined Active Labour Market Policy in Canada, with a spotlight on the LMDAs. One focus was on training opportunities provided through - and not provided through-Employment Insurance Part II, the Employment Supports and Benefits Measures (ESBMs). These include:

- Targeted Wage Subsidies
- Self-Employment
- Job Creation Partnerships
- Three Support Measures; Employment Assistance Services, Labour Market Partnerships, Research and Innovation

The majority of participants were government representatives from across the country, and others representing training service providers or client groups. Alberta, Quebec and British Columbia presented on their experiences with the LMDAs. Their presentations highlighted the success these jurisdictions were having delivering services through an integrated system and achieving savings to the EI fund. These three jurisdictions had infrastructure in place before signing agreements and their existing infrastructures made the implementation of the agreements smooth.

Articulated very clearly in the presentations were the limitations imposed on service delivery, and particularly on eligibility for services, by the EI restrictions. While the emphasis of the conference was the successes of the LMDAs, voices from the floor called repeatedly for the relaxation of the rigid eligibility criteria, expanding the range of services delivered through the Agreements, and loosening the criteria related to EI and non EI eligibility for services.

For this research, we also talked individually to provincial and federal representatives who are managing LMDA-related service delivery. The majority of our interviewees stated that they now use a bidding approach to contracting services. This approach is frequently leaving community-based training providers "out of the loop", as contracts are awarded to the lowest bidder, not always the best provider of services, nor the provider that is able to serve women's needs. Rather than acting as a mechanism for delivering training and support services to those who most need and can best benefit, in some jurisdictions LMDAs seem to be serving as vehicles for greater marginalization, moving

people further from self-sufficiency. During the conference in Alberta, grassroots participants talked about "the creaming" effect created by the results-based agreements, in which results based solely on jobs and savings to the EI fund. There is no analysis of what type of jobs and if these jobs result in sustainable livelihoods.

Traditionally, community-based training (CBT) has been a service delivery sector specializing in meeting the needs of the "disenfranchised", immigrants, refugees, part-time working poor, and other non-EI eligible workers. The references to "creaming" that echoed through the Alberta meeting suggest that the needs of those populations are, for the most part, unmet. Many women, immigrants and people with disabilities are moving further and further away from inclusion, and are becoming less likely to be seen through any policy-maker's lens which has as its focus, LMDAs.

### **Community Based Training and the CBT Lens**

Community-based training agencies in Canada have been providing "client-sensitive, quality employment and training services for over 125 years" (Canadian Coalition of Community Based Trainers, 1997, Introduction). CBT services are based on providing an educational and training model that is collaborative, holistic and non-institutional. Community-based training programs form an extensive network with hundreds of agencies involved in local, provincial and national organizations. The sector has traditionally been able to shift rapidly and adapt easily to changing labour market needs and demands while serving a population not well-served by other sectors. Community-based trainers were, for example, a key source of service provision under the former Canadian Jobs Strategy (1985-1989). Currently, the CBT sector is facing significant change and there are few signs that over the next few years the situation will stabilize. According to the Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Trainers "the infrastructure that supports CBT has changed dramatically. Federal systems of funding have changed and continue to change...training responsibilities have devolved down to the provinces, each with its own set of norms, rules and expectations. The trend towards privatization has resulted in numerous other players...becoming actively involved in the delivery of services traditionally provided through community-based services." (Canadian Coalition of Community Based Trainers, 2000, p.1).

The trend toward privatization is resulting in CBT becoming increasingly invisible as a service-delivery sector or as an alternative to other institutionally-based training. In addition, CBT is becoming invisible to policy makers because it has been defined out of independent existence through the bidding paradigm of the LMDAs. Still, from the perspective of community-based trainers and their program participants, CBT offers a unique third sector perspective and set of services which are not duplicated by either (other) private sector or public sector provider. In order to continue to serve their traditional population CBT has become a shape-shifter, changing from programs and services driven by principles and mission statements, to programs and services trying to compete for scarce funding dollars while still trying to serve their traditional client group. Community-based trainers are expected to provide programming to greater numbers of clients, be able to constantly change curriculum and learn to effectively market the services when no project dollars are available to do so. The irony is that even Human

Resources Development Canada (HRDC) acknowledges "the most effective and efficient service delivery occurs where third party service providers are welcomed, respected and integrated into local decision-making and planning." (HRDC, in Bradley-Siskind, 2002, p. 13) The HRDC report goes on to say that community-based organizations have not yet become part of the communications loop and that, without them some opportunities may be lost. The lost opportunities may be the access to services by non-EI-eligible groups that are, therefore, not under the Employment Benefit Support Measures (EBSM) umbrella. HRDC's *Assessment and Monitoring Reports* state "EBSMs are not necessarily appropriate for persons who are not job-ready. Some clients may have problems that have to be dealt with before they can deal with returning to work... Many third party providers comment that if these needs are not dealt with, efforts expended on return to work are often wasted." (HRDC in Bradley-Siskind, 2002, p.14). Dealing with these problems is precisely the area in which community-based training providers have expertise.

Within the CBT sector women-only programmes arose to serve women who were unable to access other forms of training such as the colleges, school boards or universities because of systemic or personal barriers. In concert with a supportive policy framework in HRDC, the Canadian Jobs Strategy initiated re-entry programmes for women in 1985. Women's programmes arose across the country and included the Women's Training and Employment Coalition in British Columbia's lower mainland, YWCA training and employment programmes in Ontario, Alberta and BC, and the HRDC Women's Employment Service (Lior & Wismer, forthcoming). Until 1997 there were 10 community-level programmes in Ontario funded through HRDC's Outreach Program. Women-only programs, as part of the CBT sector, have been a crucial bridge for women moving into the labour force. They serve women who face a number of barriers in their efforts to access meaningful and sustainable employment.

These barriers continue to be critical issues for community-based agencies and their clients. The implementation of the LMDA's has forced CBT to respond by shaping services and program initiatives to fit criteria and available funding: one result has been that much of the specifically developed expertise of CBT in effectively serving those can benefit from training and who are least well-served by other providers has been set aside. The emphasis is now on 'Just In Time' training, quick fixes, and a rapid return on investments in training. Specifically there are only two results that are criteria for success: a job at the end of the training intervention; and savings to the EI fund. Such a narrow view is very far from the livelihoods perspective taken by this research and suggests that the actual impacts and effects of current training initiatives are being inadequately evaluated and understood.

The program space occupied by CBT is dwindling. The policy space for CBT has effectively disappeared. The contribution made by CBT is not seen as valuable or necessary in the current structure for program delivery. Not only does this mean that people are not receiving programs and services in a manner suited to their needs, it has also created a blind spot in the policy arena. Policymakers currently have no lens through which to see the groups CBT traditionally has served, as they often are not eligible for

services through either EI or social assistance. In Toronto, and elsewhere in Ontario, a recent (March-April 2002) series of ACTEW focus groups and meetings revealed that the largest group of program participants are registering as 'unattached' to any income support program. The experience of CBT providers and others suggests that an increasing group of people are being left out. This refrain was also heard loud and clear in Edmonton at the LMDA conference.

### **By Design?: the Policy Disconnect<sup>1</sup>**

A recent review of the organisations listed in ACTEW's *Employers' Guide to Community-based Training* (1991), found that, of 36 Toronto area organisations actively involved in women's training 10 years ago, fifteen either no longer exist or have ceased to carry out core programming, effectively reducing community-based training opportunities for women by about 40%. This situation is not limited to Toronto, or Ontario. In New Brunswick, under the Canadian Jobs Strategy (1995-1989) nearly 10,000 women annually received federally funded training in New Brunswick. Since 1997, that number has dropped to just over 1600 annually. In jurisdictions across Canada, the changes mean less training for fewer people.

Although access to training is limited for people who are officially unemployed, the unemployed do have the advantage of being identified as suitable for training. Social assistance recipients, however, find themselves in another, more restricted category. In Ontario, in 1999, less than 5% of federally transferred expenditures on training were allocated to Social Assistance Recipients, through the Ontario Works program, which is predominantly a work-for-welfare program (Stephens, 2000). There is very little skills training available to people in this category.

Currently, most CBT programs still operating are primarily limited to providing interventions geared to attaching people to employment; however, there are some exceptions. In Quebec, for example, the Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et condition féminine provides computer-based and distance learning support through collaborative development and dissemination of training kits on various employment-related issues. In Ontario, Sistering, a multi-service agency working with women facing a range of issues including homelessness and mental health problems, offers a program called 'On the Path' in which women choose various aspects of training based on their own sense of what the barriers are that keep them from employment. While the focus is on employment preparation, the definition of what that entails is highly flexible and is based on participants' self-defined needs. For example, one aspect of the program has been a chronic pain management workshop. In British Columbia, Mosaic has been serving immigrants in the Lower Mainland for over 15 years, offering a multiple array of interlocking services which include case management, skills training, settlement services, financial assistance for people returning to school and services that assist clients with translation of documents and interpretation of credentials for prospective employers. The implementation of the LMDA, however, has meant that the federally-funded project-based training has disappeared. Project-based training formerly was the hub around which all of Mosaic's employment-related services moved. Its loss

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this section appear also in Lior and Wismer, forthcoming.

has been identified by Mosaic's Board of Directors as a critical problem and one that has forced them to reduce the quality and type of services offered. Similarly, another long-established CBT program offering computer skills in the Lower Mainland in British Columbia has ceased operation, at least for the time being, because of the impacts of the withdrawal of project-based training funds.

The decline in funds available for labour market training and the increasingly restrictive means of access to the training that is available affect both men and women. A recent survey of 175 agencies and organisations offering training in British Columbia found: "An overwhelming number of agencies (83%) indicated that they are turning away large numbers of people who have been determined by the funders to be ineligible. They are however, in desperate need of training. Furthermore, 80% of respondents indicated clients have to go through so many hoops to qualify for government assistance, that many of them give up. This, combined with the elimination of federal government block funding has resulted in a profound lack of services for clients, particularly the most disadvantaged" (Association of Service Providers, 1999, p.3). Women are disproportionately affected by these changes. Women are over-represented in the temporary and part-time jobs that do not lead to EI eligibility, resulting in a situation in which 31% of unemployed women are EI-eligible, compared to 39% of men (Stephens, 2000). A recent study of contingent workers in the Toronto area also found that women are over-represented in part-time, temporary and self-employed jobs, relative to men. In the Toronto study, 85% of people responding to a widely distributed survey were women. Just under half of the respondents in the Toronto study were not EI-eligible, and fully two-thirds were not eligible for benefits in the event of accident or injury through the Workers Safety and Insurance Board. Over 70% of the respondents in the contingent workers study reported that financial barriers prevented them from accessing training and education (de Wolff, 2000 p.17).

The barriers between women and the training they need have been repeatedly studied and documented, with remarkable consistency in the findings (See, for example, Wismer, 1988, Wismer and Lior, 1994, Critoph, 1997, McFarland, 1999). Access to appropriate, high quality training has been an identified problem for women for a long time. Many of the issues identified by the Bird Commission Report on the Status of Women in 1970 have not disappeared (Bird, 1970). The wage gap between men and women persists and means that women have little in the way of disposable income to allocate to training. Women continue to be concentrated in low-paying, part-time, entry level and temporary jobs, or self-employment, which are highly unlikely to include workplace-based training. The top 10 occupations for women are: retail sales clerks, secretaries, cashiers, nurses, accounting clerks, elementary school teachers, waitresses, office clerks, day care workers and receptionists (Viswanathan, 1999). A Statistics Canada study in 1999 found that 28% of women working out of the home had part-time jobs, compared to 10% of working men. From 1976 to 1999, the self-employment rate of women jumped from 5.7% to 12.5%, an increase of 75%, while men's rate of self-employment increased by 46% (Status of Women Canada, 2001). The contingent workers study cited above found that 69.4% of contingent workers earn less than \$1,500 a month or \$18,000 a year with women as a group earning less than men do. 72% of the 250 workers surveyed stated that

they would prefer permanent, full-time jobs. (de Woolff, 2000). Also in 2000, Status of Women Canada examined the impact of restructuring on women's labour market participation and found that women make up 68.8% of the part-time labour force, occupying primarily temporary, minimum wage jobs (Status of Women Canada, 2001). Researchers have found a negative correlation between wages and the percentage of female workers in an occupational category. In other words, the more women workers in a given career, the lower the average wage. Based on 1997 data from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), in Toronto, women's average hourly wage is about 84% to 89% of men's average wage (Vis wanathan, 2000). Requirements under the new federal-provincial training agreements stipulate that participants may be expected to contribute up to 70% of course costs in order to qualify for assistance (Stephen, 2000). For sole support women living on limited incomes, such requirements are often prohibitive (Lothead and Scott, 2000).

Women bear a heavy domestic burden, despite their strong presence in the labour force, which means that access to childcare, training schedules that do not conflict with family responsibilities, and some flexibility in training programs and requirements are necessary if women are to access training (Zelechow and Morais, 1997). Further, at least one in 10 women is affected by domestic violence, which not only makes it difficult to carry out regular activities outside the home, but also has a major impact on self-esteem (Horsman, 1999).

The LMEDA system and the EI fund were established with stated intentions to serve those who could benefit from training. The evidence we have collected through this research suggests that, for women, precisely the opposite is happening, – and in particular for those who are immigrants, part-time workers, or otherwise non-EI eligible. Our research also suggests that the numbers who are excluded is rising, rather than falling, while the barriers and problems experienced by women remain intransigent, if well-documented. Our conclusion is that there is clearly a structural disconnect between the stated intent of policy and its impact on the people it is meant to serve.

It would be easy to conclude also, given the information in front of us, that the current disconnect is a matter of design, of a clear disregard in policy and program structure for the right of all Canadians to participate as fully as possible in their own lives, in the Canadian economy and in the life of their communities. Our view, however, is that appearances can be deceiving. It may be that Canadian policymakers are not wilfully intending to ignore the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a long list of other pieces of Canadian legislation and regulation that endorse the development of civil society in Canada. Perhaps they are simply not seeing what it is that they are not looking for. The current policymaking lens is so conveniently narrow that it is leaving out critical information, about women, about the nature and necessities of their livelihoods and about the need for the kind of programming that CBT has historically provided.

### **By Default: the Connection Opportunity**

In Ontario there are still a small number of women-only training and employment services that have managed to survive successive policy changes and fluctuations. These

programs have been able to keep the doors open mainly because Ontario does not have a Labour Market Development Agreement in place with the federal government. Ontario is the only jurisdiction that remains without such an agreement. On the ground, this means that with the exception of actual skills training, the federal government is still contracting with third party providers to deliver employment and pre-employment assistance services. These services encompass resume writing sessions, Employment Resource Centres, job search workshops, career development counselling, and a whole package of programs under the envelope of Employment Assistance Services (EAS). This funding envelope is part of the Employment Benefit Support Measures (EBSMs) defined in Part II of the 1996 Employment Insurance Act. This funding allows agencies to keep the doors open, but as priorities and interpretations change, programs shift to accommodate the funder rather than the clients whom these programs have been designed to serve.

Ontario programs and agencies manage to cobble together a patchwork of funding that allows them to serve EI clients, clients on social assistance, those with no income support, newcomers, immigrants and others. While not all agencies have been successful in maintaining the level and number of services they had several years ago, a number of organizations are surviving with their capacity to deliver quality services intact. The current framework has demanded some redesign. For example, Career Steps at Dixon Hall, a multi-service organization in the east end of Toronto has redesigned, re-organized, restructured and revised their program several times a year for the past few years. This constant redesign to meet the demands/expectations of the funder ensures that programs fit within the shifting policy frameworks, but creates obstacles to developing stable, quality programs that work well in attaching or re-attaching people to the labour force. ACTEW members note that their programs, for the most part, do not adequately meet the needs of the women who rely on those services as an access point to the labour market (Lior, Wismer, forthcoming). Programs such as Times Change Women's Employment Services in Toronto are trying to argue that, since they are funded through the EAS envelope, they ought to be able to offer universal services. Their position is difficult to argue for effectively in the current climate of rapidly shifting and changing policy and program requirements.

Other programs - for example the On The Path Project referred to above, are able to serve women through innovative project development. The On The Path program is funded as a pilot project, but the Coordinator would like to know "if the program could be long term." In an interview for this research, she said that "it gets difficult to gain women's trust and full participation when funding is spotty and the program can only be assured for short chunks of time - life doesn't work that way". Unfortunately program funding for women's services seems to work that way.

## **Conclusion**

The policy vacuum that currently exists in the province of Ontario with the lack of a Labour Market Development Agreement has enabled women's CBT programs to continue to exist as long as they succeed in reinventing themselves on a fairly regular basis. Some women's employment and training programs in Ontario are still surviving

and struggling to maintain their capacity to offer quality services to the participants they are expert in serving. What is in jeopardy at this point is their accumulated years of expertise.. While a great deal of ingenuity exists in the sector, it is difficult to constantly "shape-shift" and at the same time match the requirements of the groups most in need of programs and services. It is scarcely surprising that our Ontario interviewees reported high levels of frustration, fear of burnout and a sense of having a precarious hold on mission, goals and organisational survival.

The fact that the Ontario programs are still surviving is, however, highly germane to the central argument of this report. There is an opportunity in Ontario to avoid the loss of program capacity and the extension of disenfranchised status which has already taken place in other areas of Canada. Further, there is an opportunity to broaden the policy-making lens to encompass a comprehensive view of livelihood and to acknowledge and act upon the importance of finding policy and program mechanisms which can address the particular labour market barriers and training needs of diverse groups of women. Finally, there is an opportunity to recognize the unique and cost-effective contribution that CBT is positioned to make to meeting the needs of women. While the absence of an LMDA structure in Ontario may be largely by default rather than design, there is at this moment an opportunity to re-design labour market training mechanisms which can more effectively connect with their stated intent than LMDAs have been able to thus far, under the existing structure and criteria.

There is no need for labour market development policy to leave women out. To the contrary, there is ample research documenting the critical importance of finding ways to include them and identifying what the most appropriate methods and programs are for doing so. A livelihoods perspective offers the broad view necessary to adequately encompass and understand women's labour market training needs. CBT has to offer over 130 years of experience in working effectively with women who are currently being systematically excluded from the opportunities that would allow them to make a full and fulfilling contribution to the Canadian economy, to their communities and households and to their own well-being. The current situation in Ontario provides an ideal place to begin.

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