**Breakout 3 - Demographic Shifts and Diversity and Inclusion – Maximizing Labour Force Participation**

**Session at a Glance**

Session Time: 10:45 am – 12:00 pm

Meeting Room: Plenary Room

Discussion Topics: Approaches to improving labour market outcomes considering changing demographics, the needs of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups and strengthening employee engagement to innovate and improve productivity.

Panelists:

* Moderator: **Melanie Ratnam**, CEO, Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology
* Panelist 1: **Mark DeMontis**, Director of Accessibility and Partnerships, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)
* Panelist 2: **Wendy Cukier**, Founder and Academic Director, Diversity Institute, Toronto Metropolitan University
* Panelist 3: **Lynn White**, President and CEO, Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS)

**Key Issues**

* Employment and unemployment rates vary across demographic groups. For example, if women 55+ participated at the same rate as their men counterparts, this could potentially add over 500,000 people to the labour force.
* While racialized individuals are more likely to pursue a university education, their employment income is lower than non-racialized and non-Indigenous graduates.
* There is a continued need for focused attention on removing barriers to employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. As of 2022, over 1 million persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64, have potential for paid employment in an inclusive, accessible and accommodating labour market.
* The 2SLGBTQI+ community also faces unique barriers to employment. Add an example…
* For youth at risk of disengaging from their education and the labour market, intervening early before they become NEET (not in education, employment or training) is key.

**Government Action**

* In July 2024, Minister Khera announced the Government’s Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities.
* The Opportunities Funds (OF) for Persons with Disabilities is the key vehicle to implement the Employment Strategy. It provides supports to both persons with disabilities and employers including job search supports, pre-employability services, wage subsidies, work placements and employer awareness initiatives.
* On September 26th, restrictions come into effect for the Low-Wage stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker program.
* Budget 2024 announced an additional two years of funding for the *Supports for Student Learning Program,* which provides funding to organizations who deliver wrap-around supports to equity-deserving students so they can remain engaged in education and achieve labour market success. The program targets youth before they become NEET, thereby smoothing the transition from school to employment for youth at risk of disengaging.
* Other Government Programs:
* Indigenous Services Canada provides funding and supports through distinctions-based Post-Secondary Education Strategies for First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation.
  + Budget 2024 announced $242.7 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, for access to post-secondary education for First Nations students through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.
* The ISET Program launched in 2019 and funded at $2 billion over five years, is distinctions-based and supports a network of over 115 Indigenous service providers across Canada. It was co-developed with and designed to support First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Urban/Non-affiliated Indigenous people to improve their skills and work towards their long-term career goals.

**Points to Register**

### Immigration has become the main driver of population and labour force growth. However, core-aged very recent immigrants (in Canada for five years or less) are still more likely to be unemployed than their Canadian-born counterparts (8% versus 4% in 2023).

* Between 2019 and 2023, the participation rate for core-aged women with youngest children under 6 years old increased by 3.8 percentage points to 79.7%, representing over 51,000 additional women joining the labour force.
  + Following the pandemic, nearly 140,000 women left jobs in high-contact sectors, with many seeking roles in low-contact industries. This marks a shift from traditionally lower-productive and lower-paying sectors into higher ones. This added $9 billion to household income for women and accounted for 15% of the total boost in their income during the pandemic recovery.
* Between 2016 and 2021, the Indigenous population grew by 9.4% compared to the non-Indigenous population (5.3%), yet their participation in the labour force continued to remain below that of their non-Indigenous peers (59.5% vs. 63.9%).
* Between 2017 and 2022, the employment rate for working aged (25-64) persons with disabilities rose 3 percentage points, from 59% to 62%, but they continued to experience a lower employment rate than persons without disabilities (78%).

**Questions to Raise**

* What impacts have been seen from the recent changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and other immigration policies?
* What barriers are most relevant to remove to improve labour force participation and employment amongst underrepresented groups?
* What components of the FCR are most viable for improvement? What gaps still exist?
* How can First Nations, Inuit and Metis demographic be further engaged to close labour market gaps?