

**Report of  
Study Visit on Employment Assistance Service  
in Canada**

(14-18 September, 2009; Vancouver, Canada)

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**19 March, 2010**

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## **i. Introduction**

Canada has developed a sophisticated employment assistance service policy; a comprehensive service model in providing inter-connected services in assessment, training, placement, and career counseling; and different roles played by various parties, such as government, service providers, training bodies, business sector etc. Compare with Canada, the employment assistance services in Hong Kong are still in primary stage in some areas, such as what the service model used or what the special knowledge that the practitioners got . It is better for the practitioners in the field in Hong Kong to get more insight and information from Canada.

HKCSS had organized a study visit tour to Vancouver from 14 to 18 September 2009. A delegation of five persons was sponsored by HKCSS to join this study visit, they are Mr. Charles Lo from Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service, Ms Almaz Yiu from Haven of Hope Christian Service, Ms Jessie Yu from Hong Kong Single Parents Association, Ms Stella Hui and Ms Ellen Tam from New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association. In this visit, the tour had visited some organizations which have run the employment assistance services and meeting with two scholars and two government officers that got some information about the models and policies what regarding the services run in Canada. This is the report for the trip.

## **ii. Background information of social welfare policies in Canada**

To understand the employment assistance services in Canada, it is necessary to study two essential welfare policies, income assistance and employment assistance at first. Income assistance is one of social welfare policies which likes

the CSSA in Hong Kong. This policy is implemented under the Ministry of Housing and Social Development of provincial government starting from February 2009. A person who is eligible to apply some income assistance if he is out of work or earning very little, awaiting other income, unable to work or in immediate need of food, shelter or urgent medical attention. The assistance recipients are mandatory to participant some employment and assistance programs. The purpose of income assistance is helping the assistance recipients move from income assistance to sustainable employment. People with disabilities who can work are supported by specialized employment programs that assist them to work as they are able. Continuous assistance is also available to those in need who are not expected to gain independence through employment.

Another policy is Employment Insurance (EI). In Canada, all employees (except self-employer) whose monthly salary is CAD\$ 3900 or above are under the scheme of Employment Insurance. The Employment Insurance program provides temporary income support to those who are between jobs; cannot work for reasons of sickness, childbirth, or parenting; or who are providing care or support to a family member who is gravely ill with a significant risk of death. Employment Insurance eligible clients are voluntary to participate in Employment Assistance Services provided by not-for-profit organizations for vocational training and job finding. The importance of this insurance is that people who are unemployed are relied on insurance not the government.

### **iii. Report of meeting with government officers**

The meeting was arranged on day-4 morning in the office of Human and Skills development Canada (HRSDC). Two officers from HRSDC joined the meeting. In the meeting, two officers explained the social welfare policies and the employment assistance programs to the tour. The key principles of employment assistance services in Canada are personal responsibility and active participation. Employable applicants are expected to look for work before they receive assistance and, where able, people receiving income assistance are expected to complete an Employment Plan, seek work, and participate in employment programs, so they may reach their goal of self-reliance. From the information of two officers, due to the global financial crises, although some special employment assistance programs set up, the unemployment rate in Canada was also rising from 4% to 8% within 2009.

### **iv. Report of meeting with scholars**

The delegation had meeting with two scholars, one is Professor Norm Amundson who is an expert in employment service delivery and Dr. Roberta Neault who interests on curriculum development services. Professor Norm emphasizes case management which is a systematic follow-up centered on the person who needed employment assistance on finding and seeking jobs. It is said to be a cost-effective service delivery to achieve the best possible results. Case management involves several phrases: Needs Identification which includes 2 processes, i.e. Needs Determination and Counseling Assessment. During Needs Determination, case manager gathers information, determining in needs, examining eligibility, examining options and interventions to address identified need, followed with an Action Plan. Counseling Assessment involves 4 phases:

Identification of Employment Difficulty; Clarification of the Employment Difficulty; Development of an Action Plan; and Implementation and Evaluation, including follow-up and case management. There is a Windows-based case management system called "Contact IV" which can automatically record employment results.

Dr. Roberta Neault is an expert on career counseling and coaching, corporate consulting and counsellor education. She is also the president of Life Strategies Ltd. which is an international consulting / training / program development company. She suggested that employment counselor should undertake a professional training program such as Career Development Practitioner Certificate Program, Global Career Development Facilitator which aiming to promoting standard of competency of employment counselors. She also recommended that HK Government can play as a role of monitoring the quality of courses, while Education Institutes (e.g. Universities) can work as the course provider through online learning. Finally, the HKCSS can be the coordinator for NGOs staff training on certified employment programs.

#### **v. Report of agencies visit**

The delegation had visited totally 2 NGOs, they were: Employment Assistance Center – **S.U.C.C.E.S.S.** Employment Services and **BC Centre for Ability**.

**S.U.C.C.E.S.S.** is one of the largest non-profit charitable social service providers in British Columbia. They began as a new immigrant settlement service organization which has developed into a multi-service and multicultural agency. There are 11 branches in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Their service includes **Social Services** (includes Settlement Service, Family and Youth

Service, Group and Community Service and Community Development and Liaison); **Employment Services** (includes Employment Assistance and Pre-Employment Service for person with persistent multiple-barriers); **Business and Economic Development Services** (includes Asian Business Connections and Entrepreneurship and Community Economic Development) and **Health and Housing Services**.

**BC Centre for Ability** is another non-profit service provider that aiming at exploring employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Their services include:

1. **SEGWAYE Program Overview** - An employment-readiness program for young adults with neurological challenges to achieve independence and successful engagement in the workplace. To help young adults access: Vocational programs, Training, Work and Volunteer experience.
2. **EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE for Persons with Disabilities (ERCPD)** - To serve adults who have a disability or chronic illness that is a barrier to employment to return to or prepare for work.
3. **Opportunities Fund (OF)** - OF is designed for adults who have a disability who are not eligible for employment services funded through the Employment Insurance system.
4. **Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network** - The Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network (GVBLN) program started in 2001. The goal is to educate and engage employers to market the benefits of hiring qualified applicants with disabilities

The employment assisting programme, as observed, shares many similarities

and core features with the existing services provided by NLPRA. Upon a closer check-up, comparable counter parts between Employment Assistance Services by both S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and BC Centre for Ability and service of NLPRA could be broken down into 3 subsections. To illustrate, the specifics are listed as in the following:

1. Employment Assistance for single employable person: A line of services that put forward the aim of smoothen the difficulties that prolonged unemployment renders on job-seekers. Four core activities include: Case Management, Career exploration Workshop, Job Finding Club and Other Employment Supportive Services such as a self-serve resource centre, job referrals, network with employers and recruitment workshops, as well as job search and workplace English. Similarities with the function of Labour Department and IEAS that organized by NGOs in Hong Kong could also be traced on the values and structural resembles in operations.
2. Pre-Employment Service for person with persistent multiple-barriers –It is a compulsory programme for the clients who are recipients of B.C. Employment & Assistance benefit. The objectives of the program are to increase the quality of life of the participant and to connect them to society so that they may be able to get a job when they are ready. Parallels could be drawn with the job searching preparation workshops organized by Labour Department, retraining programmes organized ERB and employment counseling service provided by Social Welfare Department in Hong Kong.
3. Employment Assistance for people with disabilities – For the programmes of

SEGWAYE Program Overview and EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE for Persons with Disabilities (ERCPD) are aiming to serve adults who have a disability or chronic illness that is a barrier to employment to return to or prepare for work. The objective and content is similar to the On-the-job program or Sunny way program of Hong Kong.

As much as the resembles have been/are pronounced, the development of social service of Hong Kong and that of Canadian Social Service diverges in some aspects. In a nutshell, one could argue that, compared to Hong Kong, humanitarian spirit is more efficiently spelled in the operations of Canadian Social Services. The Canadian Social Service vested more emphasis on human capital and service users are treated as potential contributors to the society; this to say, in Canada, expense incurred in social service today is regarded as investment on human and accordingly, return to be yielded by the society on tomorrow. On the other hand, the role of government is also pivotal to the success of Canadian system. The federal government works hand-in-hand with the social service provider where their working relationship rests on support and coordination beyond funding.

#### **vi. Observation / Implication to Hong Kong**

- Like other developed countries, the expansion of Social Enterprise is still under development. The development of social enterprises in Hong Kong is well-established compare with NGOs in Canada.
- There is an accreditation system in providing employment service, the staff need to finish a competency course (including engagement, need assessment, facilitation of casework, information and resource management, career counseling) for the provision of employment service.

There is a need to develop and systematize staff knowledge in providing career counseling.

- There were structured assessment tools for different phases of training/employment. This enhanced the accuracy of vocational needs and goals of interventions.
- The Government is at best to take a central role in coordinating trainings, vocational services and social security policies which help to optimize efficiency and effectiveness of employment service delivery.

## **vii. Conclusion**

This trip is a valuable experience and helps us to develop a better understanding on the employment assistance policy in Canada, also enlarge our vision by learning international experiences. Hong Kong have faced the economic down turn following the global Financial Tsunami occurred. Some negative impacts were found in society, such as the rising unemployment rate from 3.2% to 4.6% within the last quarter of 2008. Although it seems an obviously recovery of economy in 2009, many people still be cut down their salary or lost their jobs. The financial crisis will make people's life easy to become hard and stressful, and it will also become the social issue that effecting the harmony and stability of society. This is no doubt that the development of employment assistance services in Hong Kong is also become more essential. However it is not sufficient in resource and experienced practitioners in existing service. It is better to encourage the government put more investigation on it.

## viii. Appendices

**Study Tour from Hong Kong on EAS Services in Canada  
Schedule  
(Revised on September 10, 2009)**

	Sept 14 - Day 1	Sept 15 - Day 2	Sept 16 - Day 3	Sept 17 - Day 4	Sept 18 - Day 5
AM	1. Welcoming and Orientation - SUCCESS Head Office 2. Brief Overview on EAS Services in Canada <i>Jackline, Thomas + Tammy + CEO</i> Address: 28 West Pender Street, Vancouver. Phone: 604-684-1628 <i>日本領事館</i>	Professor Norm Amundson / Dr. Roberta Neault - employment theories and models and its application (Employment) <i>PM</i> Address: #217-610 Sixth Street, New Westminster, Vancouver. Phone: 604-524-2100 <i>1:30pm (UBC)</i>	1. Agency visit - The process of EAS Services - Keefer 2. Agency visit - BC Employment programming for people receiving Employment EA Assistance (on welfare) Address: #218 - 181 Keefer Place, Vancouver. Phone: 604-608-1636 <i>Day 1 PM</i>	Visit - 10-12pm, Federal & Provincial Government <i>Jennifer Gough</i> "Employment Labour market services division" ~19th/F Large Boardroom, 1050 West Pender, Van. (Burnard Skytrain) <i>9=15 日</i>	Agency Visit - Canada Social Enterprises Inc. Wrap Up and Farewell New Westminster.
PM	Brief Overview on EAS Services in Canada - SUCCESS New Westminster Centre <i>日記</i> Address: #217-610 Sixth Street, New Westminster, Vancouver. Phone: 604-524-2100 <i>45mins 車程</i>	Agency visit - Bridging Employment Program <i>Oliver AM</i> <i>Women Ctr. Monica</i> Address: #118 - 5021 Kingsway, Burnaby, Linda. Phone: 604-431-6894 <i>AM - New Westminster (45mins). Lunch - Burnaby.</i>	Agency visit - employment services for people with disabilities - BC Centre for Ability 1:30 - 3:00 pm Address: 2805 Kingsway, Vancouver. Phone: 604-630-3038 <i>30mins 車程</i> <i>1:15pm 車程</i>	Agency visit - "Ability to Small business development Business": self-employment services for people with physical and mental needs Address: #220 - 1755 West Broadway, Vancouver. (West Broadway + Burnard Str.) Phone: 604-732-3278 <i>10:30AM - 1am</i>	Wrap Up and Farewell New Westminster.

*Community work program*  
*PM - UBC / New Westminster. 4pm.*  
*Atedreen. CTR.*  
*11 - 1:30pm (Lunch)*

- ✧ Thomas Yeung (Principle) S.U.C.C.E.S.S
- ✧ Tammy Leung (Manager) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Monica Mak (Program Manager & Business Advisor) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Jackline Ochieng (Manager) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Olivia Tang (Manager) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Neville To (Program Manager) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Keith Chan (Employment Consultant) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Iris Sun (Management Support Coordinator) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Mumtaz Patel (Program Manager) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Gary C. Bizzo (Program Manager) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Eliza Chang (Project Director) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Adelin Yang (Program Officer) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Ping Lu (Program Assistant) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Ray Tsang (Program Manager) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ✧ Monique Ho (Case Manage / Counsellor) S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

- ✧ Angela Kwok (Executive Director) BC Centre for Ability
- ✧ Aaron Wilson (Community Coordinator) BC Centre for Ability
- ✧ Ivar Wik (Community Coordinator) BC Centre for Ability
- ✧ Professor Norm Amundson
- ✧ Dr. Roberta Neault
- ✧ Jennifer Gough, Ministry of Housing & Social Development