

## Talking Points: Priority – Employment Security

### LINE - Background

#### “Make Work...Work!”

- Employment is a key factor in maintaining adequate income and reducing poverty.
- The average unemployment rate for people living with MS is a staggering 60%.
- Research shows that people with MS have disproportionately high unemployment rates given their educational and vocational histories.
- Yet people with MS want to work and struggle to continue to work. Often the problem is one of flexibility and accommodation. We need to move past the notion of work as a binary switch of “*you can work (no assistance) /you can’t work (assistance).*”

We are pleased to see the amendments to the federal labour code allowing for formal requests for flexible work arrangements. Additionally, we are happy to see the 2018 federal budget include proposed amendments to the Employment Insurance (EI) Act relating to the Working While on Claim pilot rules to make them permanent and extend the pilot to include EI Sickness Benefits. With effective implementation and support, this is a step in the right direction.

It’s time to make flexible and inclusive employment security for people with MS a priority to allow people with MS and other episodic disabilities to remain in the workforce. This is in alignment with the findings from the Conference Board of Canada’s newly released “[MS in the Workplace: Making the Case for Enhancing Employment and Income Supports](#)” and their 2016 report [MS in the Workplace](#) as well as the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP)’s report “[Leaving Some Behind: What Happens When Workers Get Sick.](#)”

### SINKER—Our Request:

The federal government should continue to help “*Make Work...Work*” by:

- ✓ **Improving the coordination of and program eligibility by including episodic disability in the basic definition of disability across the income, disability, employment programs** (e.g. Employment Insurance (EI) Sickness Benefit, Canada Pension Plan – Disability (CPP-D), and Disability Tax Credit (DTC))
- ✓ **Enhancing the EI Sickness Benefit program by:**
  - Extending the duration of EI Sickness benefits from 15 weeks to 26 weeks to match compassionate care benefits
  - Eliminating the clawback
- ✓ **Ensuring effective implementation of the amended federal labour code formally allowing requests for flexible work arrangements from employers.** Additionally, we recommend the federal government *consult with provinces and territories on the implementation of similar changes in provincially regulated sectors.*