

Disability Leadership in Atlantic Canada

Mario Levesque, PhD - Mount Allison University - malevesque@mta.ca

Infographic - 3 - Boards

1 - Context

- **Boards of Directors** are a necessity for nonprofits that wish to maintain “charity” status with the Canada Revenue Agency so they can issue tax receipts for donations.
- For disability non-profit Executive Directors, Boards of Directors can either be helpful, by being sources of information, support and guidance, or a source of frustration by placing significant demands on them.
- Much hinges on whether Boards are policy (set broad governance frameworks) or operationally (involved in day-to-day activities) oriented.
- Thus, Boards have a mediating effect on Executive Directors. For example,

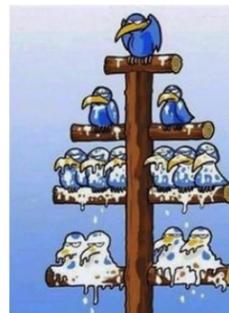
a) if **Boards are focused on questions of legitimacy** such as organizational processes and professionalization, this leads to **task-oriented** pressures on Executive Directors.



b) if **Boards are focused on questions of funding and fundraising**, this leads to **participatory and collaborative** pressures on Executive Directors.



c) if **Boards are focused on questions of organizational performance** such as effectiveness and efficiency, this leads to **top down** pressures on Executive Directors.



Thus, Board orientations do not necessarily align with leadership style & skills of Executive Directors.

2 - Question

How are disability non-profit Executive Directors impacted by their Board of Directors in Atlantic Canada?

Have Boards of Directors adopted generative governance (transformational)?

n= 52 surveys / 272 (19.1% completion) + 42 Executive Director interviews

3 - What we found...

- Majority (55%) strived to be a policy-oriented Board but admitted that, in reality, they were a hybrid-oriented Board and often involved in day-to-day activities.
- Little evidence of mediating effect of Boards on Executive Directors.
- Executive Directors strongly indicated that Boards were a **source of frustration** in that the roles were largely reversed with them (Executive Directors) acting as the source of information, support and guidance.
- Boards not transformational; continue with fiduciary governance



4 - Significance

- **Challenges** - Boards of Directors are “necessary evils” to maintain “charity” status and offer broad oversight functions yet can be time consuming. Executive Directors need to “manage the Board”; Boards overly concerned with fiduciary responsibilities (reporting)
- **Opportunities** - Organizational transformation largely not realized due to host of reasons including,
 - precarious funding
 - discrimination & stigma
 - time constraints
 - changing population dynamics
 - Board focus on reporting activities