



VIABLE CALGARY

Humanly Possible

Workforce Inclusion Plan
Calgary Chamber
of Voluntary Organizations
June 2011



June 24, 2011

Our workforce is undergoing dramatic change and the ways we have traditionally envisioned our places of work are being challenged. Over the next decade, all industry sectors, including the nonprofit sector, will need to be creative in finding and retaining qualified employees.

In light of the upcoming labour challenges in Alberta, it is tempting to view employing persons with disabilities as simply a strategy to tap into a underutilized labour market. Rather, in all labour markets – from times of high unemployment to the boom years - employment of persons with disabilities is a wise business decision. Viewed in its fullness, this Workforce Inclusion Plan is not simply a response to anticipate labour shortages, but more accurately, it is a means to build awareness of a labour demographic that has for many years been underappreciated and underutilized in our sector.

Alberta's nonprofit sector is an essential part of creating and sustaining healthy communities. With over 20,000 organizations providing an array of services to virtually every Albertan, billions of dollars in revenues, and more than 100,000 employees, the nonprofit sector is a foundational component of the province's social and economic infrastructure.

The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO) advocates for the nonprofit and voluntary sector, promoting and strengthening the nonprofit and voluntary sector by developing and sharing resources and knowledge, building connections, leading collaborative work, and giving voice to critical issues affecting the sector.

On behalf of the membership of CCVO and the nonprofit sector we serve, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Viable Calgary for their dedication to serving the disability community and their ongoing work in creating healthy and sustainable communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Grogan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Grogan
Vice President, Programs & Operations
Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

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There is a war for talent and anyone who intends to win it better realize two things: first, that it is a global war and second, that if you restrict your search for talent in any way... you will be giving your competitors the edge they need to put you out of business.

William G. Parrett,
President – Deloitte & Touche



Executive Summary



Today, all employers in all sectors are growing increasingly concerned about future labour shortages. In 2011, the first Baby Boomers will reach the age of 65. This is significant as it is the first time more workers will leave Canada's workforce than enter it, opening the gap between labour supply and projected demand. The combined effects of an aging population, retiring baby boomers and the challenges with the work skills/ethic of younger workers means qualified workers will be in high demand and employers will once again, be competing for labour.

Nonprofit organizations face a unique set of challenges with the coming labour shortages. First, in the context of higher unemployment rates and a recovering economy, the employment barriers faced by unemployed and underemployed Albertans is still greater than in the recent past. This is resulting in a heavier demand for services provided by the nonprofit sector. Second, at the same time that the demand for their services is increasing, the ability of nonprofit organizations to attract and retain a viable workforce is once again threatened.

It is now necessary for all employers - profit and nonprofit alike, to look to underutilized talent pools to meet current and future labour demands. This is particularly critical for the nonprofit sector – in the last boom, the sector was overwhelmingly vulnerable to Human Resource challenges largely due to wage parity competition with other industries. The nonprofit sector can mitigate its risk in coming labour shortages by leveraging resources from other talent pools. One traditionally overlooked labour pool is persons with disabilities.

The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations and Viable Calgary have partnered together to expand upon CCVO's commitment to providing nonprofit organizations with valuable employment related resources that will ensure the success of each organization.

Viable Calgary

Viable Calgary has been operating since 2008 and is a well-respected employment/workforce initiative. The project is well known to industry, employers, service providers and job seekers with disabilities in the Calgary region. The project has a proven track record of quality service, results and professionalism. Viable Calgary consistently demonstrates its capability of supporting industry to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the economy and labour market. Viable Calgary is a cross ministry initiative funded by the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta. Through connections with industry associations and individual employers, Viable Calgary aims to increase the participation of persons with disabilities within the Calgary workforce.

Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations gives voice to the nonprofit and voluntary sector. CCVO's insight and leadership generate results for the sector to be able to thrive and contribute to strong, healthy communities. CCVO promotes and strengthens the nonprofit and voluntary sector by developing and sharing resources and knowledge, building connections, leading collaborative work, and giving voice to critical issues affecting the sector.

CCVO understands that the inclusion of employees with disabilities in nonprofit workplaces makes good business sense and aside from being a smart Human Resource strategy, it aligns the diversity of the nonprofit workforce with the diversity of the communities served by the nonprofit sector. Ultimately, services are more likely to be better utilized if they are more representative of the populations they serve.

CCVO and Viable Calgary Partnership

The partnership between CCVO and Viable Calgary is also a method of providing nonprofit organizations with resources to face current and future labour challenges unique to this sector. The sector is not exempt from impending labour and skill shortages and if the sector is to remain viable and productive, nonprofit organizations will need to adapt their recruitment/retention strategies for non traditional labour pools - including persons with disabilities.

Viable Calgary and CCVO collaboratively administered a Round Table Discussion with several nonprofit organizations to identify the capacity of nonprofit organizations to employ persons with disabilities including: experience with employees with disabilities, sector knowledge of available resources to assist with disability/employment issues, and the sector's prevailing attitudes and beliefs about persons with disabilities. The information gathered revealed gaps in knowledge, experience/barriers and learning opportunities. All this information culminated in the development of a Workforce Inclusion Plan (WIP) that Viable Calgary has developed for the nonprofit sector.

The recommendations and corresponding resources outlined in this WIP, serve as a basis for the development of policies and procedures for the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the nonprofit sector's workforce. Viable Calgary is available to work alongside nonprofit organizations in the implementation of this WIP.

Introduction

Viable Calgary has developed a Workforce Inclusion Plan (WIP) unique to Calgary's nonprofit sector. The objective of this WIP is to identify/understand barriers to the inclusion of employees with disabilities in the nonprofit sector, assess opportunities to build the capacity of Calgary's nonprofit sector to include employees with disabilities and then to connect sector leadership and individual members to a variety of tools and resources that will assist them with including employees with disabilities in their workplaces.

Viable Calgary asked nonprofit organizations to share information about their experience and knowledge in building and managing a diverse and inclusive workforce and the importance of such a workforce to their organization. During the Round Table Discussion, Viable Calgary identified the collective experience of the sector with employing persons with disabilities, the awareness of local resources and the sector's prevailing attitudes and beliefs about persons with disabilities. Based on this feedback, Viable Calgary identified areas where nonprofit organizations can take advantage of available resources and where Viable Calgary can provide assistance. The recommendations in this WIP will assist nonprofit organizations to increase their capacity to include employees with disabilities in their workforce.

This WIP can assist in developing new diversity initiatives or in improving upon existing policies and procedures, by providing information on resources for disability awareness, recruitment, sensitivity training, accommodations and many other aspects of engaging employees with disabilities.

The Business Case for Hiring Persons with Disabilities

The present work environment has changed significantly from that of the past and diverse labour pools have been engaged to meet growing demands for labour. While the economic recovery since the 2008 recession has been slow, the requirement to access all potential labour resources still remains a key business strategy.

REALITY:

In Calgary, like across Canada, persons with disabilities are underrepresented in the workforce.

According to the Alberta Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook 2009-2019, Alberta can expect a shortage of approximately 77,000 workers by the year 2019.¹ This is due to the aging workforce, declining birthrate and a decline in the population of 15-24 year olds. Where will employers find skilled professionals to replace the retirees of the baby boomer generation? How will employers compete for qualified employees? If prepared for these population changes, employers can maintain a competitive edge within their specific industry.

REALITY:

Businesses have to broaden their definition of disability and their hiring practices in the face of the changing labour market, to remain competitive.

It is important to recognize that as the population ages, the incidence of disability among the population also increases. At least one chronic condition was reported by the vast majority of older workers. As the workforce population ages, the group of people reporting activity limitations will increase with an average of 69% over the age of 45 by 2019.² Among workers, the likelihood of having a chronic condition increased with age - 68% of men 50 to 54 had been diagnosed with a chronic condition compared with 83% of men aged 65 to 69. For women, the rates were higher than the rates for men.³

¹ *Alberta's Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook, 2009-2019*, Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2009.

² *Alberta's Supply Outlook, 2009-2019, Visible Minorities, Aboriginals, and People with Disabilities*, Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2010.

³ *Aging, Health and Work*, Wendy Pyper, Statistics Canada, 2006.

If demographics are changing our labour force, our customers are also changing.

This information has important implications for the labour market because these changes will affect the overall labour supply and employers will have to find additional ways to include workers with activity limitations.

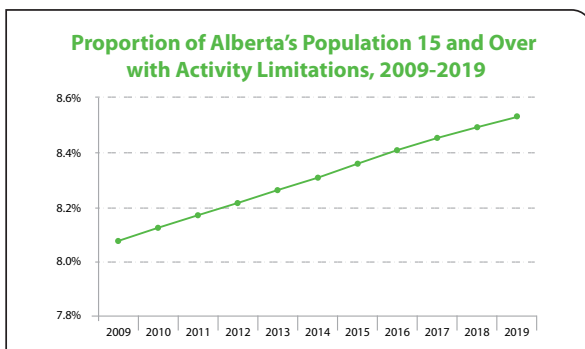
If demographics are changing the nature of our labour force, they are also changing the nature of our customers. Having a workforce that reflects your customer base is necessary to remain competitive and relevant to your marketplace. In Canada, persons with disabilities account for an estimated \$25 billion a year in consumer spending and they influence the spending decisions of 12 to 15 million other consumers.⁴ In order to keep a competitive edge, businesses must begin to make adjustments including accessible services and products for customers with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities make up a significant portion of the population and this overlooked and underutilized segment is growing. This group consists of many skilled and qualified individuals seeking employment. Restricting your search for talent may lead to missed opportunities to successfully hire qualified employees.

REALITIES:

- Employers have a need for skilled workers.
- Persons with disabilities are an underutilized pool of talent available to meet our growing skill and labour shortages.
- Persons with disabilities are a large, growing consumer market.

A diverse workforce ensures an organization is considering all of their labour supply options. With the proper tools and resources in place, managers can maintain a focus on hiring the right person for the job based on ability. Organizations with a proactive approach to future workforce challenges will be positioned as strong competitors within their industry.



Source: Alberta's Supply Outlook, 2009-2019, Visible Minorities, Aboriginals, and People with Disabilities, Alberta Employment and Immigration, 2010.

Did you know?

Disabilities are both visible and invisible and cover a huge spectrum of conditions ranging from arthritis and depression to physical and developmental challenges. There are over 435,000 Albertans with some kind of disability, many of them looking for work.

Source: Calgary and Region Social Outlook 2008-2013, The City of Calgary, 2008.

⁴ Outlook for People with Disabilities in Current Analysis, Royal Bank of Canada, 2000.

Industry Profile



Nonprofit organizations are comprised of a variety of organizations including, but not limited to: registered charities, incorporated nonprofit organizations and groups that are not registered or incorporated.

Canada's Voluntary Sector Initiative defines the nonprofit sector as "self-governing organizations that exist to serve the public benefit, generate social capital, but do not distribute private profit to members, depend to a meaningful degree on volunteers, involve participation on a voluntary basis, and are independent or institutionally distinct from the formal structures of government and the profit sector."⁵

Alberta had the highest per capita number of nonprofits in the country, consisting of more than 19,000 nonprofits, charities and community based organizations which employed over 105,000 staff in 2003.⁶ According to the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations, 57% of employees are full-time, with 43% being part-time and at least 45% of these positions are contracted.⁷

The nonprofit sector in Alberta has cited several challenges regarding workforce sustainability. According to the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organization's Weathering the Storm - 2010 Economic Climate Survey, respondents repeatedly stated having difficulty with recruiting and competing with government and the private sector who offer more attractive employment packages. Though staffing challenges lessened somewhat due to the slowing economy in 2008 and 2009, many organizations predicted that human resources challenges will increase as the economy improves in the years ahead.⁸

In order to meet these challenges, organizations within the sector will need to implement new strategies for recruiting and retaining their workforce. One key strategy to help overcome these pertinent challenges is the ability to access underutilized, yet skilled and educated, labour pools such as persons with disabilities.

⁵ *An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*, Voluntary Sector Forum, 2001.

⁶ *Proliferation of Charities*, United Way of Calgary and Area, 2006.

⁷ *The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in Alberta: Regional Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*, Robert Roach, 2006.

⁸ *Weathering the Storm*, CCVO Economic Climate Survey, Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, 2010.

Recommendations

Viable Calgary, in collaboration with the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations conducted a Round Table Discussion with several nonprofit organizations operating in Calgary.

The objective of the Round Table Discussion was to assess the nonprofit sector's experience with employing persons with disabilities, their knowledge level regarding available resources and their prevailing attitudes and beliefs about persons with disabilities.

Based on the findings of the Round Table Discussion, Viable Calgary has identified opportunities where nonprofit organizations could further develop their knowledge regarding the hiring, training and retention of employees with disabilities.

These recommendations are to serve as a basis for nonprofit organizations to build their own inclusive workforce strategies. Further consultation from a Viable Calgary Workforce Consultant is available for the implementation of these strategies:

- Expand the definition of diversity by including disability.
- Evaluate and develop job descriptions and recruitment methods to encourage applications from qualified candidates with disabilities.
- Prepare hiring managers for interviewing candidates with disabilities.
- Connect with local service providers and determine which products and services can aid in the search for qualified talent and retention of current employees.
- Increase knowledge of accommodation and where to look for help in providing accommodation.

1. **Expand the definition of diversity by including disability.**

Participants cited a variety of conditions when asked what the term 'disability' encompasses. The examples given covered physical, learning, developmental and psychological disabilities and conditions.

To assist in developing a consistent and all-encompassing definition of disability, nonprofit organizations can refer to the following information regarding defining disabilities in the workplace.

DEFINING DISABILITY:

- **Employment Equity Act – Canadian Human Rights Commission**

"Persons with disabilities" means persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or believe that an employer or potential employers is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, and includes persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace.⁹

- **Statutes and Regulations – American Disabilities Act (ADA)**

A mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. ADA protection extends not only to individuals who currently have a disability, but to those with a record of a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or who are perceived or regarded as having a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.¹⁰

⁹ *Employment Equity Act*, Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2010.

¹⁰ *ADA Basics: Statutes and Regulations*, American Disabilities Act, 1990.

	VISIBLE DISABILITIES	INVISIBLE DISABILITIES
General Description	<p>A person's obstacle is visible: use of wheelchair, prosthesis, walker, oxygen, etc. or they may have loss of limb(s) or sight.</p> <p>Limitations may be minor to totally disabling.</p>	<p>A person's limitations are invisible from the outside, such as debilitating fatigue, pain, neurological damage, lung deficiencies, heart problems, and cognitive deficits, etc.</p> <p>Limitations may be minor to totally disabling.</p>
	<i>Note: A person may have both visible and invisible disabilities.</i>	
Different Frustrations	<p>Although the person may LOOK like they are unable to complete a task, they are often perfectly able to participate, with or without limitations.</p> <p>People PRESUME they have barriers, even when they say they can complete a task.</p>	<p>Although the person may LOOK perfectly able to complete a task, they may have barriers that require support in order to complete the job requirements.</p> <p>People PRESUME they have no barriers.</p>
Similar Frustrations	<p>People PRESUME they know what their abilities are by looking at them.</p> <p>People DO NOT BELIEVE THEM when they say they can do something.</p>	<p>People PRESUME they know what their abilities are by looking at them.</p> <p>People DO NOT BELIEVE THEM when they say they cannot do something.</p>
Different Goals	<p>Having to convince others that even though they MAY NOT look able, they are dis-ABLED or ABLE to participate in work or an activity.</p>	<p>Having to convince others that even though they MAY look able, they are DIS-abled or UN-able to participate in work or an activity.</p>
Common Goals	<p>STRIVE for respect, credibility, admiration and belief.</p> <p>They do not want to be PREJUDGED by their outer appearance.</p> <p>They desire ACCESSIBILITY: the right to enjoy a store, restaurant or recreational area, etc. just like everyone else.</p>	<p>STRIVE for respect, credibility, admiration and belief.</p> <p>They do not want to be PREJUDGED by their outer appearance.</p> <p>They desire ACCESSIBILITY: the right to enjoy a store, restaurant or recreational area, etc. just like everyone else.</p>

Source: Adapted from *Understanding the Differences and Similarities Between Having Visible and Invisible Disabilities* developed by The Invisible Disabilities Advocate, 2004.

Persons with disabilities are not a small portion of society. The total population of persons with disabilities in Alberta grew 22.9% from 354,740 in 2001 to 435,820 in 2006.¹¹ This may be attributed to the aging population and to the increased social acceptance of disability which has encouraged more disclosure.

Additional disability informational links have been provided below:

- **Canadian Paraplegic Association – Alberta branch**
www.canparaplegic.org/en/152.html
 This website contains informational videos on adaptive vehicles, research and career profiles.
- **Handspeak**
www.handspeak.com
 This website is an online sign language dictionary.
- **The Brain Injury Association of Alberta (BIAA)**
www.biaa.ca
 This website contains current information, research and resources regarding individuals with a brain injury.
- **My Mental Health**
www.mymentalhealth.ca
 This website contains information on different types of mental illness and resources on where to seek help for individuals with mental illness.

Training on workplace sensitivity can be useful in educating employees on the topic of disability. *The Alberta Human Rights Commission* provides customized and public workshops which cover several areas of human rights in the workplace. Customized workshops provide employers with information on topics including:

- A Respectful and Inclusive Workplace
- Human Rights Legislation in the Workplace
- Discrimination & Harassment in the Workplace
- Duty to Accommodate
- Human Rights & the Employment Process
- The Human Rights Complaint Process

The public workshops are either full day or half day sessions that provide an overview of Alberta's human

¹¹ *Calgary and Region Social Outlook 2008-2013*, The City of Calgary, 2008.

rights legislation, in addition to covering two main topics: ***“Preventing Harassment in the Workplace”*** and ***“Duty to Accommodate”***.

“Preventing Harassment in the Workplace” will help participants to understand:

- Different types of harassment
- The impact of harassment on the work environment
- Employer liability and responsibility in dealing with harassment
- How to create a respectful work environment free of harassment
- How to develop a harassment prevention policy

“Duty to Accommodate” will enable participants to:

- Gain an understanding of the duty to accommodate and its application to the grounds protected under Alberta’s human rights legislation
- Respond to requests for accommodation
- Understand the concept of undue hardship
- Create inclusive workplaces that provide accommodation

These workshops are available to the public and are particularly recommended for:

- Business owners
- Managers and supervisors
- Union representatives
- Anyone interested in learning more about human rights in the workplace

Please visit www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/education/workshops.asp for schedules of public workshops or to request a customized workshop for your workplace.

Local service providers also provide sensitivity training for employers. Please see Recommendation #4 for further information on these service providers.

2. Evaluate and develop job descriptions and recruitment methods to encourage applications from qualified candidates with disabilities.

Focus group participants cited a need to increase their visibility to the disabilities community and job seekers, as employers who are welcoming of applicants from all segments of the population, including persons with disabilities.

Inclusive job descriptions and targeted recruitment methods can be effective in communicating a message of inclusiveness and can increase the volume of applications from persons with disabilities.

The structure and wording of job descriptions in job postings may contain unintentional barriers for qualified candidates with disabilities. Also, certain information may be unnecessary or may be discouraging applications from a diverse range of candidates. Ensure that items in a job description are directly linked to the core competencies of the role, omitting ambiguous and unrelated requirements.

Job Descriptions:

An effective and inclusive job description should include the following:

- Job title of the position and its ranking within the organization (clerical, managerial, janitorial, etc.).
- Essential duties and responsibilities including an action verb, the actual task and the expected outcome, such as: “Scheduled building maintenance and repairs to ensure uninterrupted business operations.”
- Estimated time spent (percentage %) on each duty and responsibility and frequency of activity (performed daily, weekly or periodically).
- Specific physical demands of the overall position, such as “Must be able to lift 50 pounds frequently”, including a statement that “Reasonable accommodations will be made if deemed necessary.”
- Environmental factors in the work setting that affect the position such as “Excessive noise in an open concept environment, etc.”



- Non-essential duties or conditions that can be performed infrequently (occasional overtime) including a statement that “Reasonable accommodations will be made if deemed necessary.”
- Job qualifications including education and previous work experience, as well as statements such as “Willingness to learn, customer service skills and team building abilities, etc.”¹²

The following are tips for writing an inclusive job description provided by the Job Accommodation Network:

- Should be clear and concise with non technical language and should avoid any unnecessary words.
- Should focus on words that have a single meaning; for words that may be interpreted differently a detailed description should be included.
- The expected outcome of the duty should be described, rather than having one method for accomplishing the task. Instead of “Writes down notes during meetings,” make the wording more inclusive by saying “Records notes during weekly meetings.”
- Should avoid using gender specific language, jargon, brand names and ambiguous wording.¹³

Job descriptions should also contain information indicating that an employer is open to recruiting from a diverse talent pool, which includes persons with disabilities. This can be easily done by including an equity statement in your job announcement, application forms and any other recruitment materials. For example:

“At ABC Company, we value the diversity of people and products. Diversity at ABC Company means a workplace where individual differences are recognized and appreciated, respected and responded to in ways that fully develop and utilize each person’s talents and strengths.”

Documentation and consistency are very important in the recruitment process, as well as keeping accurate and detailed records. These documents serve as proof that due diligence has been done in recruiting the right person for the job. Please see the side panel for the suggested Recruitment File Checklist.

¹² *The Importance of Job Descriptions Under the Americans with Disabilities Act*, The Human Equation, Inc., 2009.

¹³ *Job Descriptions*, Job Accommodation Network, 2010.

Utilizing new forms of media to advertise the job posting may also help ensure employers are accessing a broad and diverse talent pool. Unintentional barriers such as lack of technology may prohibit a potentially qualified candidate from being able to access the job posting and therefore not having the opportunity to apply. This subsequently leaves the employer with a smaller pool of applications to choose from. Utilizing assistive technology is one option that will ensure job postings are more accessible to a greater volume of applicants. For example, an organization's website can be reformatted to facilitate supported technology including options to increase font size, read back text, etc - this will provide more candidates with the opportunity to access the job postings.

Providing the job posting to service providers can also help ensure the search for talent is being extended. Service providers may often provide specific candidates that match your requirements, thereby reducing the amount of time and energy invested in the hiring process.

For information on local service providers who provide job posting services, please see Recommendation #4.

3. Prepare hiring managers for interviewing candidates with disabilities.

Participants from the Round Table Discussion indicated the importance of focusing on the abilities of individuals rather than their disabilities. Those responsible for hiring are able to obtain resources to assist them in the qualification of, and interview process for candidates with disabilities. This can help hiring managers avoid any barriers which may prohibit an effective screening process.

Interviewing a person with a disability is fundamentally no different than interviewing a person without a disability. An organization interviews the individual to determine if the person, regardless of their disability, can perform the duties that are required of the position. Interviewers should ask questions that are job related and based on job requirements. Consistency can be created by using a standardized interview guide, allowing all candidates to be asked the same questions for each position within the organization. These questions should also be periodically reviewed alongside the job descriptions and kept in

Recruitment File Checklist:

1. Current and accurate job description
2. Proofread job posting (including employment equity and diversity statements)
3. List of mediums used to post job ads (i.e. newspapers, websites, service providers etc.)
4. Good selection of applications (resume/cover letters) to choose from
5. Interview guide for each candidate being interviewed (reiterate candidates responses in the interview, no personal opinions)
6. Copies of all reference and background checks
7. Copies of all correspondence (including emails) referring to recruitment of any candidates

a recruitment file, as mentioned in Recommendation #2. A method of strengthening an organization's recruiting practice is accessing disability awareness training for interviewers – this training prevents interviewers from developing assumptions about any candidate's capabilities. An organization can also implement standard guidelines which assists candidates and the interviewer in determining if any accommodations will be required for any part of the interview process.

Pre-Interview Suggestions

After an organization has received applications, reviewed resumes and have shortlisted a group of candidates, the interviewer may want to consider the following suggestions before contacting the candidates for interviews:

- When calling candidates to schedule an interview, make sure to inform them that your office is an accessible site and be prepared to explain in detail what this entails, if asked. Accessibility can include considerations such as appropriate parking, non-slip surfaces and clearly labeled emergency exits. For an example of an accessibility checklist, please see the *City of Calgary Universal Design Handbook*, available at www.calgary.ca/docgallery/bu/cns/universal_design_handbook.pdf.
- Ask the candidate if they require any accommodations for the interview. Accommodations could include providing assistive technology, modifying the physical environment and American Sign Language interpreting.
- If written material will be used during the interview, make sure to ask the candidate if they require an alternative format such as large print, Braille or electronic display.
- If a written or computer test is going to be administered, ask the candidate if they will require a reasonable accommodation including allotting additional time to complete the testing process.
- Let the candidate know all the names of the people who will be conducting the interview.

- Be prepared with written detailed directions to your office, including different routes, approximate times and a map depending on their transportation method.¹⁴

Considerations when interviewing a person with a disability:

- A person with a disability is an individual first. Focus on the person as an individual with unique qualities.
- Individuals with disabilities do not want a job out of sympathy.
- Persons with disabilities want to be included. A job is not a gift, it's a job.
- Ask the applicant to describe how he/she would perform a certain job function or if reasonable accommodations are required.
- Speak directly to the person. Shake hands when you first meet. Do not refer to the person's disability unless it is relevant to the conversation.
- When in doubt, ask. Whether it be asking to offer help or asking someone to repeat themselves if you did not understand what was said.

According to Link Up Employment Services, the following are types of interview questions to avoid:

- The nature or severity of a person's disability.
- The condition causing a disability.
- Any prognosis or expectation regarding a disability.
- Whether the person will need treatment or special leave because of a disability.
- Information about a medical condition, its remission or treatment.
- The worker's compensation history of the candidate.¹⁵

¹⁴ From *Disabilities to Possibilities, A Guide to Hiring, Training and Retaining People with Disabilities*, Link Up Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities, 2007.

¹⁵ From *Disabilities to Possibilities, A Guide to Hiring, Training and Retaining People with Disabilities*, Link Up Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities, 2007.

When interviewing persons with disabilities, there are a variety of courtesies to keep in consideration. The following outlines various examples of such courtesies:

Interviewing a person with mobility aids:

- Make sure that candidates who use crutches, canes or wheelchairs are able to keep them within reach. Be aware that some wheelchair users may choose to transfer themselves out of their wheelchair and into an office chair for the interview.
- To facilitate conversation when interviewing a candidate in a wheelchair, sit in a chair to place yourself at that person's eye level. Treat the wheelchair as a part of the body space that belongs to the person who uses it.

Interviewing a person with a visual impairment:

- When greeting a candidate with vision impairment, identify yourself and introduce anyone else present in the conversation.
- Let the candidate know if you move, suddenly need to end the conversation or if someone else enters or leaves the room.
- If you offer assistance, patiently wait until your offer is acknowledged and then listen for further instruction.
- If there is a need to escort the candidate with a visual impairment, invite him or her to take your arm at or above the elbow.
- Guide rather than lead the candidate by giving verbal directions while you go. For example, "We are going to walk through a door."
- Provide verbal directions about the location of the candidate's seat.
- If a service animal is present, please refrain from interacting with the animal.



Interviewing a person with speech impairments:

- Be patient and allow the candidate to complete their thoughts without being interrupted.
- Do not pretend to understand what the candidate is saying. Ask for a repetition of what you did not understand or try to rephrase what you wish to communicate.
- Do not raise your voice without being prompted. Most individuals who are speech impaired can hear and understand.

Interviewing a person with hearing impairments:

- If the candidate lip reads, look directly at him or her and speak clearly at a normal pace. Do not exaggerate lip movements or shout, but do speak expressively because the candidate will rely on facial expressions, gestures and eye contact. Refrain from covering your mouth with your hand while you speak.
- If the candidate does not read lips, use brief written notes or a sign language interpreter.
- If a sign language interpreter is present, it is common to sit beside the interviewer and across the candidate being interviewed.
- Speak directly to the candidate being interviewed, not the interpreter.¹⁶

For further information on interviewing, please visit *Interviewing* within the **Hiring** section of www.viablecalgary.ca.

4. Connect with local service providers and determine which products and services can aid in the search for qualified talent.

Awareness of local service providers was high amongst Round Table participants. However, utilization of these services to recruit persons with disabilities appears to be

low within the sector. There is an opportunity for nonprofit organizations to increase their access to job seekers with disabilities by partnering with local placement service providers.

In addition to traditional employment agencies, employers are able to access new talent through a diverse group of service providers. Service providers offer a range of supported employment services for companies and for employees with disabilities.

What is Supported Employment?

Supported employment is a term used to describe a service provided to persons who face barriers to accessing and retaining employment. Supported employment often refers to both the development of employment opportunities and ongoing support for those individuals to maintain employment.

Not all persons with disabilities need accommodation or supported employment. However, for individuals who have complex or multiple barriers, utilization of job search and job retention supports have proven to create successful relationships between these individuals and their employer.

A service provider may also offer a wide variety of other employer supports including: work experience; disability specific information; human rights information; consultation on accessibility supports and information, management and employee awareness training.

Key Service Provider Terminology, Definitions and Examples:

Successful job development for persons with disabilities is about meeting the unique needs of each job seeker and their employer.

¹⁶ *Employ with Expertise, An Employer's Toolkit for Success in Hiring Individuals with a Disability*, WORKink Alberta, 2003.

Job Carving (creation): a way to modify or restructure existing jobs or bring together a combination of job tasks that fill the work needs of an employer, while capitalizing on the skills and strengths of workers with significant disabilities. Although there are various approaches to creating jobs, the implementation steps and overall goals and outcomes are the same. One approach is to develop a new position (one that did not previously exist), such as a mail delivery clerk at a business where personnel used to pick up their own mail at a central location. Another strategy involves selecting certain duties from one or more existing job(s) and combining them into a separate position (i.e. a worker is hired in an office to support only copying and filing needs).¹⁷

Job Accommodation: designing work environments that are barrier-free, so that everyone is given the opportunity to perform to their potential. When the designs are not enough and individuals need accommodation, it also means making adjustments or alternative arrangements, or changing a rule or a practice in order to remove discriminatory effects.¹⁸

According to the Policy Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, when accommodating a person with a disability, whether in the design or as an adaptation, three principles must be kept in mind¹⁹:

1. **Fairness:** We must give every employee and candidate a reasonable opportunity to perform or demonstrate competencies. Merit can only be demonstrated after this first principle is met.
2. **Quality:** We do have to alter the nature or level of performance or qualification that is essential to the work.
3. **Uniqueness:** Needs are often unique situations different due to the circumstances and people involved. Accommodation therefore requires a case by case assessment. Avoid acting on assumptions.

Please see Recommendation #5 for more information on accommodation.

¹⁷ *When Existing Jobs Don't Fit: A Guide to Job Creation*, Condon, C., Enein-Donovan, L., Gilmore, M., Jordan, M., 2004.

¹⁸ *Workshop on Duty to Accommodate*, Policy Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2003.

¹⁹ *Workshop on Duty to Accommodate*, Policy Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2003.

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There are many elements to creating a successful accommodation... the key elements include establishing clear and realistic expectations, collaboration with all the invested stakeholders and making use of all the resources available.

Pola Swiecicki,
Disability Specialist –
The Forzani Group

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Job coaching: a valuable resource for employers, co-workers and any newly hired employees. Job coaches help the employee with a disability transition into their new role more smoothly. The job coach is not there to do the work for the supported employee, but rather to provide ongoing support to that employee and their colleagues. For example, if there are changes to administrative duties, the employer can consult the job coach to determine the amount of support the employee requires in order to properly adjust to these changes. The job coach can also be consulted when concerns arise at the workplace that the employer may not know how to properly approach. Generally, the aim is have job coach support diminish over a determined period of time, so that the supported employee can be successful and independent in their position.

The following case study illustrates the use of a job coach to provide diminished supports to an employee with a disability in the workplace:

The employee began their role as a donation attendant at a thrift store located in Calgary. The employee utilized the support of a job coach intensively during each shift for the first two weeks of employment. Due to multiple barriers, this employee required a job coach to help with implementing a routine to ensure that all required tasks were completed in a timely manner. The job coach supported the employee by helping him create a task list with specific timelines attached to each task. Following this initial orientation and training phase, the employee utilized job coaching supports on an ongoing, but minimal basis, as the job coach helped the employee develop a system for staying on task and getting tasks completed within expected timelines. Furthermore, the job coach had assisted the employee to establish relationships with staff and natural supports with management, whom he could approach in case of any questions or concerns. After three months of employment, it was determined that the employee was successfully working independently, had the support of co-workers and management and no longer needed the job coaching support. This success was largely due to ongoing job coaching support and continuous involvement of the store management and staff. The job coach then met with the store manager to develop a retention plan to help aid the staff in being a part of the employee's ongoing success.

Establishing a partnership with a service provider and developing a relationship built on service quality can enhance an employer's knowledge with respect to recruitment of persons with disabilities, as well as recruitment in general. Please note that there are many different service providers available in Calgary and throughout Alberta. Each service provider has their own level of experience and area of specialty; it is important for an organization to contact several providers before deciding which is most appropriate for each organization's needs.

Successful working relationships with service providers require that an employer have a solid understanding of their own Human Resource needs, in order to properly match those needs with the services offered by the various service providers.

The following items should be considered before deciding which service provider to approach:

- Is this a contract or permanent opportunity?
- Number of hours required for the position (P/T or F/T).
- Can the position and job duties be altered or shared with another employee, if necessary?
- Is shift time flexible? (start/end and break time)
- Will you accept a trained job coach for onsite coaching for the new employee?
- Is your facility accessible and barrier-free?
- Would you like the job posting to be posted with the service provider?

For additional items to consider, please visit *Recruiting* within the **Hiring** section of our website at www.viablecalgary.ca.

Listings of service providers typically outline the nature of the services they offer, in order to make the selection process for employers as simple as possible. Some Alberta service providers are listed below:

- **Alberta Association for Supported Employment (AASE)**
www.aase.ca/links/
- **Alberta Employment and Immigration (AEI) Calgary Region Employment-Training and Career Service Directory**
www.employment.alberta.ca/documents/RRM/RRM-CG-etcs-immigrant.pdf
- **Central Alberta**
www.centralalberta.ab.ca/index.cfm?page=employmentservices
- **Community Disability Services Edmonton**
www.cdsedmonton.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=99&Itemid=110
- **Persons with Developmental Disabilities-Edmonton Region Community Board**
www.pdd.org/edmonton/agencies_bycommunity.shtml
- **Viable Calgary Hiring Resources, Service Provider Listings**
www.viablecalgary.ca/index.php/Resources/Who-Can-Help-Me-Hire.html

Once an organization has decided which service providers to contact, the following is a list of potential questions to identify if a selected service provider can meet each organization's specific recruitment needs:

- Can you explain the hiring process for one of your clients?
- Do you provide your clients with pre-employment training?
- How quickly can you fill this position?
- Are there any fees involved in your service?
- Do you offer additional training for my existing staff?
- Do you provide funding for accommodations?





This relationship between employee and employer has many positive effects; it creates a good working environment, satisfies a person's desire to contribute to society and to one's own well-being and it also creates a loyal employee that has a desire to prove themselves.

Lisa Thompson,
Assistant Branch Manager
BMO Bank of Montreal



- Do you provide on the job supports for candidates? How long can you provide this support? Will there be multiple job coaches on the work site?
- What can I do to assist the candidate's transition into the workplace?
- How can you support me if the candidate is not a suitable fit for the role and organization?
- Will you provide multiple candidates for the available positions?
- Will a member of your staff attend the interview with the candidate?
- Do we need to set up a site tour before bringing candidates to our facility?
- Will the candidate require a job coach? If so, how often can I expect to see the job coach?
- What is your preferred method of communication?
- Can you provide references for your services and successful placements?

5. Increase knowledge of accommodation and where to look for help in providing accommodation.

During the Round Table Discussion, participants indicated confusion regarding the legal requirements associated with employee disclosure, implementing accommodations and documenting accommodations. The following information and resources can aid in alleviating concerns regarding accommodation.

What is Disability Disclosure?

Disclosure refers to the process of an employee informing their employer of a disability/impairment. This may happen in several ways, including anonymously, for example through a staff disability/impairment survey, or openly, for the purposes of achieving reasonable accommodations or specific support at work.²⁰

Having an open discussion and communicating the overall benefits of disclosing, is essential from day one. Employees should be able to make a request for accommodation at any point during their employment. It is imperative that

²⁰ Staff Disability Disclosure in the Lifelong Learning Sector, Disability Equality Implementation Group, 2009.

all employees are educated on the procedures of disclosing and are encouraged to disclose in order to be properly accommodated.

An organization should monitor all staff for changes in behaviour and make professional notes of the behavioural changes. Employers should be available and prepared to discuss those witnessed changes with the employee, if deemed necessary. Employers should be proactive in open discussion with the employee on any issues that maybe affecting their performance and suggest possible accommodations that may help in alleviating some of the pressure and improve performance. Being proactive in this situation may help eliminate the thought that the organization “ought to have known” there was a change in behaviour and that there was no accommodation offered or recommended.

Duty to Accommodate refers to the obligation of an employer, service provider or union to take steps to eliminate disadvantage to employees, prospective employees or clients resulting from a rule, practice, or physical barrier that has or may have an adverse impact on persons with disabilities.²¹

Accommodations are very common in the modern workplace and exist in various forms, including flexible work hours, assistive technology software and modifying equipment and physical environment. Employers with a solid understanding of accommodation methods are not only able to broaden their search for qualified talent, but can also experience the benefits accommodation provides in retention efforts for current employees. These employers recognize that accommodating is a very important part of their everyday duties associated with doing business.

Accommodations can include:

- Making existing facilities accessible
- Job restructuring
- Part-time or modified work schedules
- Acquiring or modifying equipment

- Modifying communication methods to provide qualified readers or interpreters
- Changing training materials, policies, instructions or reference materials

An effective method to determine possible workplace accommodations for an employee is to simply ask the employee for their ideas. Often, persons with disabilities have developed their own ways of doing things efficiently and may have suggestions that may not have otherwise been considered. Workplace accommodations vary and what works for one person may not necessarily work for everyone.

Accommodations should also be implemented in such a way as to not single out any employee, particularly in situations where an employee who has requested accommodation does not disclose their condition to co-workers. This may not always be manageable, as some disabilities are more visible than others.

Every accommodation scenario is unique, but there are methods to ensure that the accommodations are implemented in such a way as to not interfere with co-worker relations or interactions with customers. For example, an employee may request an accommodation due to an allergic reaction to scents and fragrances. To avoid involuntary disclosure of the employee by making their work area fragrance-free, an alternative solution. Another example is a case where a diabetic employee requires specific break schedules to accommodate their dietary and medicinal needs. A new break policy could be established for all employees, where breaks are flexible so long as productivity and work is not interrupted. Being creative in these and other accommodation scenarios is vital to ensure minimal effect on co-workers and customers.

Proper record maintenance regarding the duty to accommodate is also essential. Please refer to the suggested Record Keeping Checklist for tips on best practices for recording confidential information.

²¹ *A Place for All-A Guide to Creating an Inclusive Workplace*, Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2006.

Record Keeping Recommendations:

Employee File:

1. Use only professional language. (These documents can be subpoenaed and read in court).
2. File initial employee paperwork (employee contract, banking information, etc.).
3. Any correspondence on job performance evaluations and issues.
4. Request for accommodation(s).
5. Accommodation documentation including doctor's notes for modified duties.
6. Any other relevant correspondence or documentation.

Health File:

This file may be separate from the employee file, but should be filed next to the employee file.

1. Detailed health information pertaining to the specific roles and duties of the job requirements.
2. Any job related correspondence with medical professionals.
3. Any other confidential medical correspondence that may be essential for emergency personnel to find immediately without viewing other confidential information.

Why Be Proactive and Embrace Accommodation in the Workplace?

Studies indicate that effective accommodation is a powerful motivator. Persons with disabilities who are satisfied with their workplace accommodations typically become loyal and highly productive employees. Studies also indicate that better accessibility for one usually translates into better usability for all. Therefore, an investment in accommodation is an investment in organizational growth and also results in cost reductions associated with hiring and turnover. Government assistance (or funding) may also be available for accommodations in the workplace. The Disability

Related Employment Supports (DRES) program provides supports to persons with disabilities including worksite modifications and technological aids. Other DRES services include job orientation, worksite orientation, job coaching and co-worker preparation. More information is available at www.employment.gov.ab.ca/dres.

Additional information on workplace accommodations is available:

- **Job Accommodation Service (JAS) – Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work**
www.ccrw.org/main.php?id=63&category=programs_services
This website offers fee-based bilingual advice, consultations and assessment services to Canadian public and private sector companies.
- **The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) – Office of Disability Employment Policy**
www.askjan.org
This website offers free guidance and expertise to both employers and employees on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.
- **Workplace Accommodation Toolkit, Government of Canada**
www.apr.gc.ca
This website offers a web based application toolkit that delivers accessibility requirements and standards, which can be applied to purchase mainstream products and services.

The following chart illustrates possible workplace accommodations for a variety of common disabilities.

Common Disabilities and Possible Workplace Accommodations

DISABILITY	POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATIONS	EXAMPLE
Autism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a visual performance chart Providing job coaching Giving positive feedback Modeling appropriate social skills 	<p>An autistic employee has difficulty dealing with change in their routine at work. The employer could facilitate daily or weekly meetings with this employee to help them prepare for upcoming changes to the job duties. This could help reduce the employee's anxiety level significantly.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0</p>
Brain Injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a private and quiet workspace Reducing distractions such as noise or clutter Using reminder tools such as sticky notes, to do lists, and calendars, etc. Allowing more time to complete tasks Using environmental memory cues, such as color coded files, and labels, etc. 	<p>Upon returning to work after a brain injury, an employee is unable to read past the midline on their computer screen when reading from left to right. The employer could change the margin settings on their word processing program to limit right side reading, redesign the workspace so that everything is on the left, or purchase software that can split the computer screen, blacking out the right side.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0-\$300</p>
Environmental Sensitivities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posting signage that indicates an "Allergy Alert" Implementing a "fragrance-free" policy Installing hypo-allergenic furniture and carpeting 	<p>An employee is highly sensitive to perfumes and colognes and experiences flu-like symptoms when faced with these substances. Implementing a "fragrance free" policy prohibiting staff from using perfume/cologne in the work area may help alleviate symptoms.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0</p>
Epilepsy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arranging work schedules to avoid sleep disruption Replacing flickering lights with a steady light source Allowing flexible work hours Training employees in the appropriate emergency response if a seizure occurs 	<p>For an individual with epilepsy that experiences nocturnal seizures, providing a flexible start time will accommodate the need to sleep later on mornings after a seizure.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0</p>
Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowing a flexible work schedule and a self paced workload Minimizing distractions Reducing job stress Providing written job instructions and structured job assignments 	<p>An administrative employee with FMS could be accommodated with a telephone headset to reduce neck pain, forearm supports when typing and writing aids such as a portable angled writing surface.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: less than \$150</p>
Hearing Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a well-lit work area Using qualified sign language interpreters Using assistive listening devices Flashing warning lights on moving vehicles, machinery and fire alarms Using voice recognition or speech to text software 	<p>A baker who is deaf could be provided with a vibrating pocket timer for the oven and a flashing light could be installed on the timer with emergency alarms.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: less than \$500</p>
HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing an ergonomic chair with extra padding to accommodate for weight loss Reducing physical components of the job by providing a rest area in the workplace Allowing job sharing, a shorter work day or extended work week 	<p>An employee with HIV/AIDS may need additional time off during work hours for medical treatment. An employer could allow a flexible work schedule that will let the employee make up missed time by staying later or coming in earlier.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0</p>
Developmental Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extending training time to learn new tasks Providing on-the-job support from supervisors/colleagues Using a job coach Providing assistive technology 	<p>A job coach can be an excellent resource for the employer and the employee with a disability. Often, the job coach will assist with training and help come up with creative ways to support an individual in the workplace.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0</p>
Learning Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using reminder calendars, checklists and to do lists, etc. Providing a tape recorder or Dictaphone Using proofreading software Providing text to speech software Assigning a job coach 	<p>An individual with dyslexia who has trouble editing and proofreading documents could have an on-the-job mentor (co-worker) who assists them with such tasks.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0</p>
Mental Health Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowing flexible scheduling Providing a self paced workload Allowing the option of working from home Allowing longer or more frequent breaks Allowing the use of supported employment and job coach Allowing time off for counselling 	<p>For an employee with high anxiety, providing self-paced tasks or the ability to work from home can help ease work-related stress.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: \$0</p>
Physical/Mobility Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customizing an ergonomic design for the work station Making the facility accessible Working from home Providing assistive devices and software Allowing a flexible start time Having a co-worker "buddy" system to assist in case of emergency procedures such as an evacuation or fire 	<p>Providing overall accessibility to your facility, such as wheelchair ramps, automatic door openers and elevators, will ensure that your location is accessible to existing and potential employees as well as customers.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: varies depending on needs</p>
Visual Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing hand-held magnifiers Having Braille printers and computers Using voice activated software, calculators and clocks, etc. Providing software designed specifically for low vision users Providing a service dog-friendly work environment 	<p>An individual with low vision could be accommodated with low vision software and a large computer monitor.</p> <p>Accommodation cost: varies depending on software and equipment required</p>

Summary



The demographics of our population are changing. These changes require employers to develop workforce plans that are up to date and respond to the new labour environment.

By accessing every possible source of labour, employers will be better prepared for present and future workforce challenges. Having the tools and resources in place for the integration of persons with disabilities is, and will remain, a key strategy for successful workforce development and for future business planning.

Based on the Round Table Discussion with nonprofit organizations, Viable Calgary was able to assess their general awareness of and experience with employees with disabilities. This WIP has been customized to fit the needs of nonprofit organizations and contains strategies for building upon this existing knowledge and experience. Viable Calgary is confident that if the recommendations are properly implemented, Calgary's nonprofit organizations will broaden their Human Resource practices to include hiring, training, and retaining employees with disabilities.

This WIP is intended for distribution to the nonprofit sector in Calgary through the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organization's extensive network. The information has been compiled through the joint efforts of Viable Calgary and the leadership of the CCVO. Upon obtaining this WIP, nonprofit organizations are encouraged to contact Viable Calgary for further information on the topics discussed and for any other related information. Viable Calgary can assist in the implementation of this WIP and help evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

Acknowledgements

Viable Calgary wishes to express its appreciation to all of the individuals who contributed their time and effort to the development of this Workforce Inclusion Plan.

In particular, we thank the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations and its members for providing their valuable insight, without which this resource could not have been completed.

Special thanks are extended to the Advisory Committee for ongoing dedication of their time and effort in support of the Viable Calgary project.

Viable Calgary also acknowledges Lisa Thompson of BMO Bank of Montreal, Bruce Skorobohach of Columbia College and Pola Swiecicki of The Forzani Group for contributing quotations.

The Viable Calgary project is funded by the Government of Canada and Government of Alberta, whose continued support is very much appreciated.

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*This project receives funding from
the Government of Canada and
the Government of Alberta.*