

**REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT
FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
IN QUESNEL**

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Background

With Rick Hansen confirmed as keynote speaker for Career Leap 2008, the City of Quesnel obtained funding through Service Canada to hire a Research Coordinator to establish a report and recommendations for improved access to the local labour market for persons with disabilities.

This project will also assist in meeting the targets of the 10 by 10 Challenge. This challenge was issued to all B.C. municipalities to increase the number of disabled workers in their communities by 10% by the year 2010. The 10 by 10 Challenge was issued by the Mayor of Vancouver, Sam Sullivan and Minister of Employment and Income Assistance Claude Richmond at the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM) meeting in October 2006. Quesnel officially joined the Challenge in June 2008. The 10 by 10 Challenge is not just about the numbers. The promotion of the benefits of hiring the disabled as well as encouraging communities to increase their understanding on issues of accessibility and inclusion are also goals of the 10 by 10 Challenge.

The target number for Quesnel in the 10 by 10 Challenge is to have 70 more persons with disabilities employed by 2010. This number is an estimate based on the number and location of persons with disabilities in the Ministry of Housing and Social Development (MHSD) caseload. It takes into account the number of ministry clients earning income; however only 20% of B.C.'s disabled population are on the ministry caseload so it is purely an estimate.

The purpose of this report is to determine barriers that persons with disabilities face when seeking employment in Quesnel. Recommendations are included on how to decrease some of these barriers, thus increasing employment opportunities for this demographic.

As Canada's population ages, not surprisingly, the rate of disability increases. With the abolition of mandatory retirement, employers will be required to accommodate older employees with various age-related disabilities. This is providing a greater need for communities to become more aware of disability issues.

Before the recent downturn in the economy, it was estimated that nearly one million jobs would be created in B.C. by 2015. Due to the now uncertain economic times, these numbers may not be as accurate. However, employers will still need to replace retiring baby boomers, and with fewer youth entering the workforce this could still pose a challenge to employers.

It is estimated that by 2011, workers between the age of 45 and 64 will comprise approximately 41% of the workforce. This is up substantially from 1991, when this group comprised only 29% of the workforce. Employers will need to start looking at where to find suitable employees. People with disabilities are ready, willing and able to fill some of these positions.

Some statistics from *A Profile of Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia: Employment, Labour Market Needs and Occupational Projections*, a research paper prepared for The Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities, show the status of disabled persons in the labour force in B.C.

- Approximately 13.8% of the population in B.C. have at least one disability.
- 44% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 72% of people without disabilities.
- 21% of individuals with a disability are unemployed compared to 6% without disabilities.
- People with disabilities experience lower income levels than those without disabilities.

The Business Case for Hiring Persons with Disabilities

As outlined in *Recruiting and Retaining Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia, An Employer Handbook*, the business case for hiring persons with disabilities is a very simple equation:

- Employers need skilled workers.
- Persons with disabilities are a largely untapped human resource available to meet today's growing labour and skill shortages.
- Persons with disabilities are a large, growing consumer market.

Expanded talent pool

Employers in B.C. need skilled employees to fill positions that keep their businesses competitive in local, provincial, national and global markets. With the number of labour force entrants expected to decline, employers cannot continue to ignore any untapped pool of talent.

Employment for Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities continue to struggle to share in the social and economic mainstream of society. The costs that result from unacceptable unemployment rates and wasted human potential amongst persons with disabilities have an impact on individuals, employers and governments.

Growing consumer market

In Canada, the spending power of persons with disabilities is now estimated to be about \$25 billion annually. They also influence the spending decisions of friends and families and, in doing so, at least double their economic reach. Companies that recognize the value of reflecting the characteristics of their consumers within their workplace will reap the benefits in productivity and sales.

By bringing these factors together, the needs of both employers and persons with disabilities can be met.

Myth vs. Reality of Persons with Disabilities in the Workforce:

One of the myths that some employers may have about disabled workers is that they “don’t really want to work.” The fact is that staff retention is 72% higher among persons with disabilities, saving millions of dollars each year in recruitment and training.

More examples of myths versus reality are included in the table below.

Myth	Reality
Persons with disabilities can’t keep up with other workers.	90% of persons with disabilities rated average or better on job performance than their non-disabled colleagues.*
A person with a disability is likely to miss a lot of work.	86% of people with disabilities rated average or better on attendance than their non-disabled colleagues.*
My staff wouldn’t want to work with a person with a disability.	Persons with disabilities bring diversity to the workplace, which has a distinct and positive effect on staff morale.
A person with a disability cannot work in a position requiring physical labour.	Only 10.5% of persons with disabilities have mobility related disabilities.**
Hiring a person with a disability will require changing my workplace.	The vast majority of persons with disabilities who are currently employed require no special workplace accommodations.
A person with a disability will have more accidents on the job.	98% of people with a disability rate average or better in work safety than their non-disabled colleagues.*
Accommodations make it too expensive to hire a person with a disability.	Accommodations for persons with disabilities are generally very inexpensive and are tax deductible.

* https://www.workablesolutionsbc.ca/site/workable_solutions/resources/toolkit3.asp

**PALS survey, Statistics Canada, 2001

Accessible Tourism

Persons with disabilities represent approximately \$25 billion in annual spending in Canada. The 2010 Legacy Now website points out that persons with disabilities also represent a growing population of travellers. These numbers increase significantly when expanded to include seniors with accessibility needs; the friends, family and caretakers who travel with people with disabilities; and people with temporary accessibility needs such as injury, pregnancy and families using strollers.

The vision of the Quesnel Measure Up Committee is to work towards Quesnel being known as “The most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the North.” By making Quesnel more accessible and inclusive to its own disabled community members and promoting the success of the community in working towards this goal, it follows that accessible tourism could become a large draw to the community for disabled persons and their families.

Quesnel already has many accessible attractions such as its trail system and the Quesnel and District Arts and Recreation Centre, which is continually looking at ways to make the facility more accessible to all community members. This past summer new weight training equipment was added that includes pull-out benches. This enables wheelchair users to access the equipment without having to transfer out of their wheelchair, which can be tedious for some. An art class is also provided for special needs members of the community on the first Monday of every month. It is hoped that, possibly as early as next year, this program could be expanded to include other activities such as swimming.

A new fully accessible library is in the final stage of construction and automatic doors were recently installed at the Quesnel Curling Rink funded by the two local Rotary Clubs of Quesnel and a grant from 2010 Legacies Now. This helped to accommodate wheelchair curlers' access the club.

The 2010 Legacy Now website also outlines why accessible tourism benefits everyone:

- Consumers get more choice;
- Businesses and communities access a significant and often underserved market;

- B.C. demonstrates its commitment to equity and fairness;
- People with disabilities become more engaged in community life;
- Businesses have access to a larger number of employable people.

Accessible tourism is a growing market. One Quesnel could capitalize on with the support of local government, business and community members.

Methodology

Before designing the surveys that went out to local employers and persons with disabilities and their family members, extensive research was conducted. It involved a review of current information on persons with disabilities in employment, labour market projections and employment programs for persons with disabilities.

Related provincial and federal reports were studied along with one local report, the Measure Up Quesnel Strategic Plan. This latter report focuses on improving accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities in five different areas: living in the community, getting around in the community, working in the community, playing in the community and visiting the community.

Internet research was also carried out which included provincial and federal government websites, disability organizations and disability publications.

The three main target groups identified for this research were:

- disabled persons and their family members
- local employers
- local service providers.

At the end of the surveys, opportunity was given for all employers, disabled participants and family members to share their suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel. Some also provided comments under an 'additional comments' heading.

Copies of the surveys issued are attached as **Appendix A**.

A Profile of Disabled Respondents

Approximately 200 surveys were sent to disabled persons and their family members. The exact number is difficult to establish because some were sent by e-mail and forwarded to others.

Surveys were distributed with the help of local service providers; some that work solely with the disabled and some that provide services to non-disabled clients as well. They include: Community Living BC, Quesnel Tillicum Society, Innovative Living Solutions Inc., Dengarry Professional Services, Quesnel Employment Services, handyDart and the North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society.

Through Community Living BC, surveys were forwarded by e-mail to Prima Enterprises, Quesnel Community Living Association, SD28 (resource teachers) as well as disabled clients and their family members.

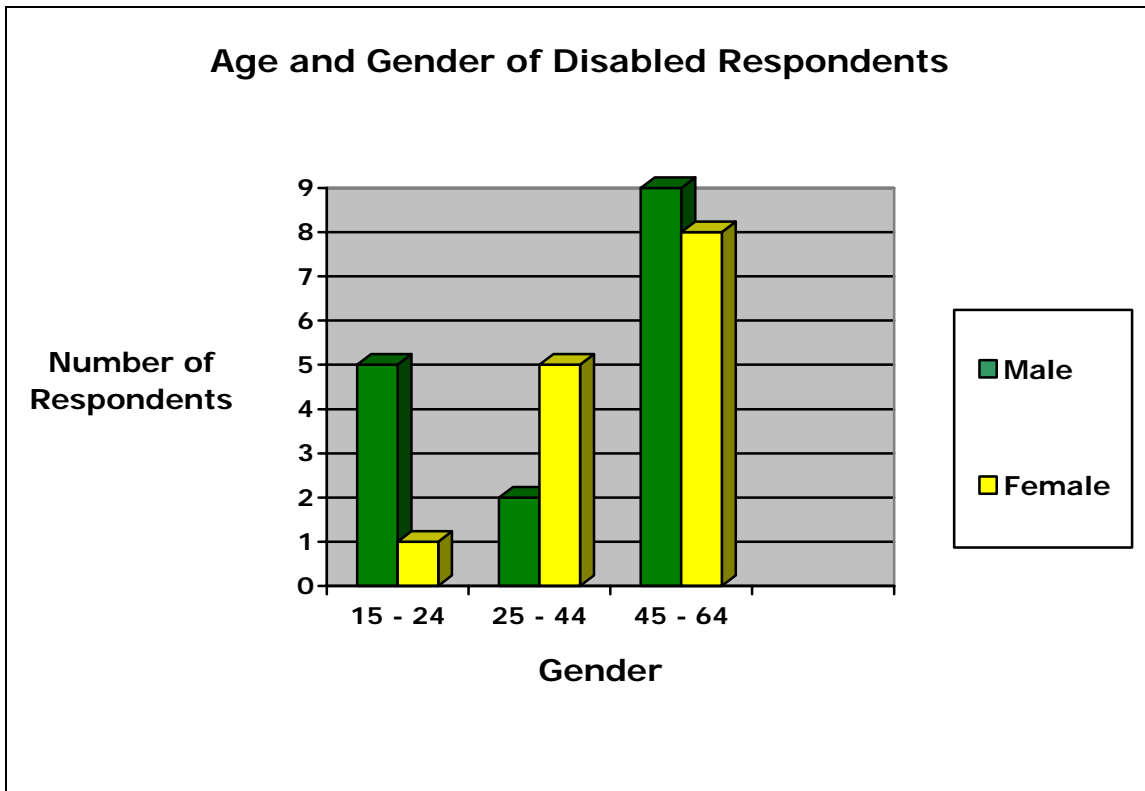
The family member survey was designed to collect information from persons with disabilities who may not be able, for a variety of reasons, to complete a disabled participant survey on their own.

Participant surveys were completed and returned by 28 persons with disabilities and two family members of a person with a disability. Due to the low number of family member surveys completed, the information gathered from these surveys will be included in the statistics for the 28 disabled participants, giving a total of 30 completed surveys. This represents a return rate of approximately 15%.

This return rate is somewhat disappointing. Every effort was made to reach our target market, and we are unsure as to the reasons for the low participation rate. Wide coverage was provided in the local press and through various agencies. It is difficult to believe that there is not a genuine need for employment for persons with disabilities within the Quesnel area. Further research into this is recommended.

Age and Gender of Respondents

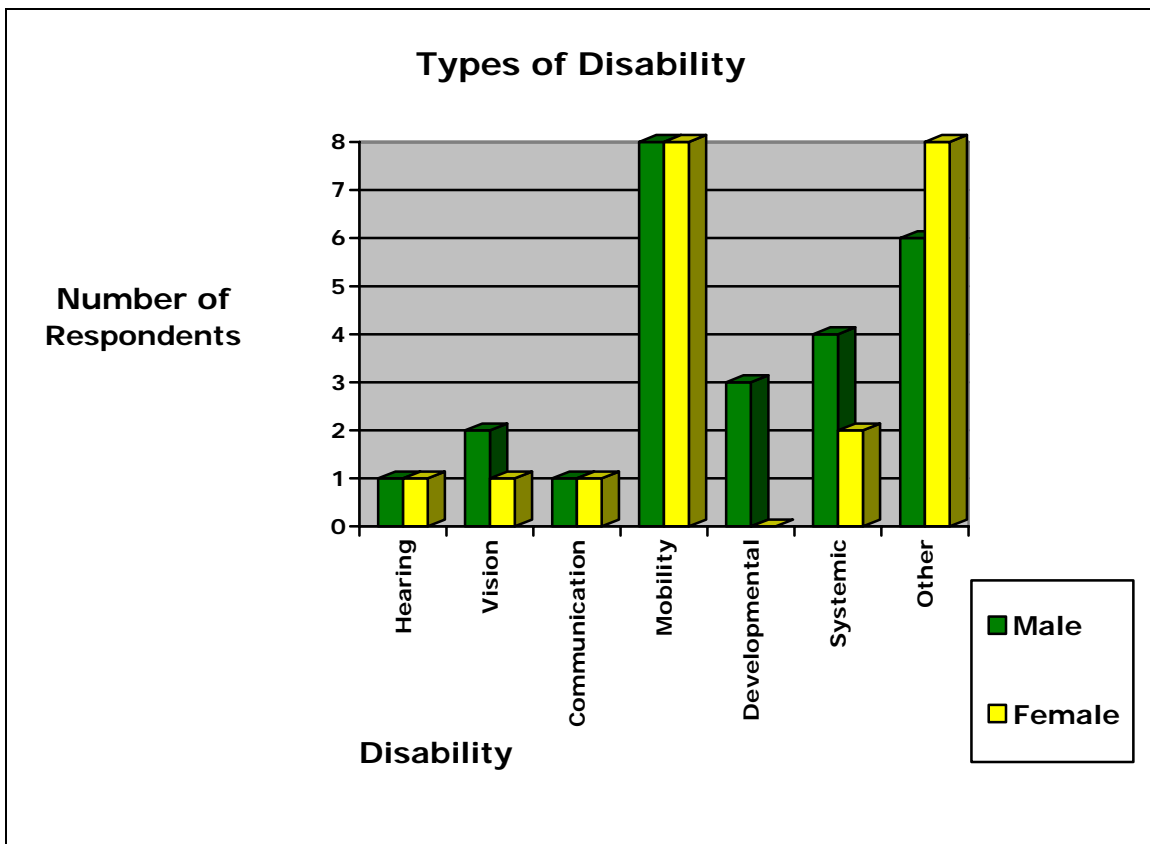
As seen in the chart below, the age range of disabled participants varies from 15 – 64. No one 65 or over completed a survey. The 45 – 64 age category comprises over half of survey respondents with a total of 17 of the 30 disabled respondents. The 15 – 24 age category has the least number of respondents with 6 of the 30 completed surveys and the 25 – 44 range with a total of 7 respondents.



Types of Disability

Types of disability reported by respondents include, but are not limited to: hearing, vision, communication, mobility, developmental, systemic and other.

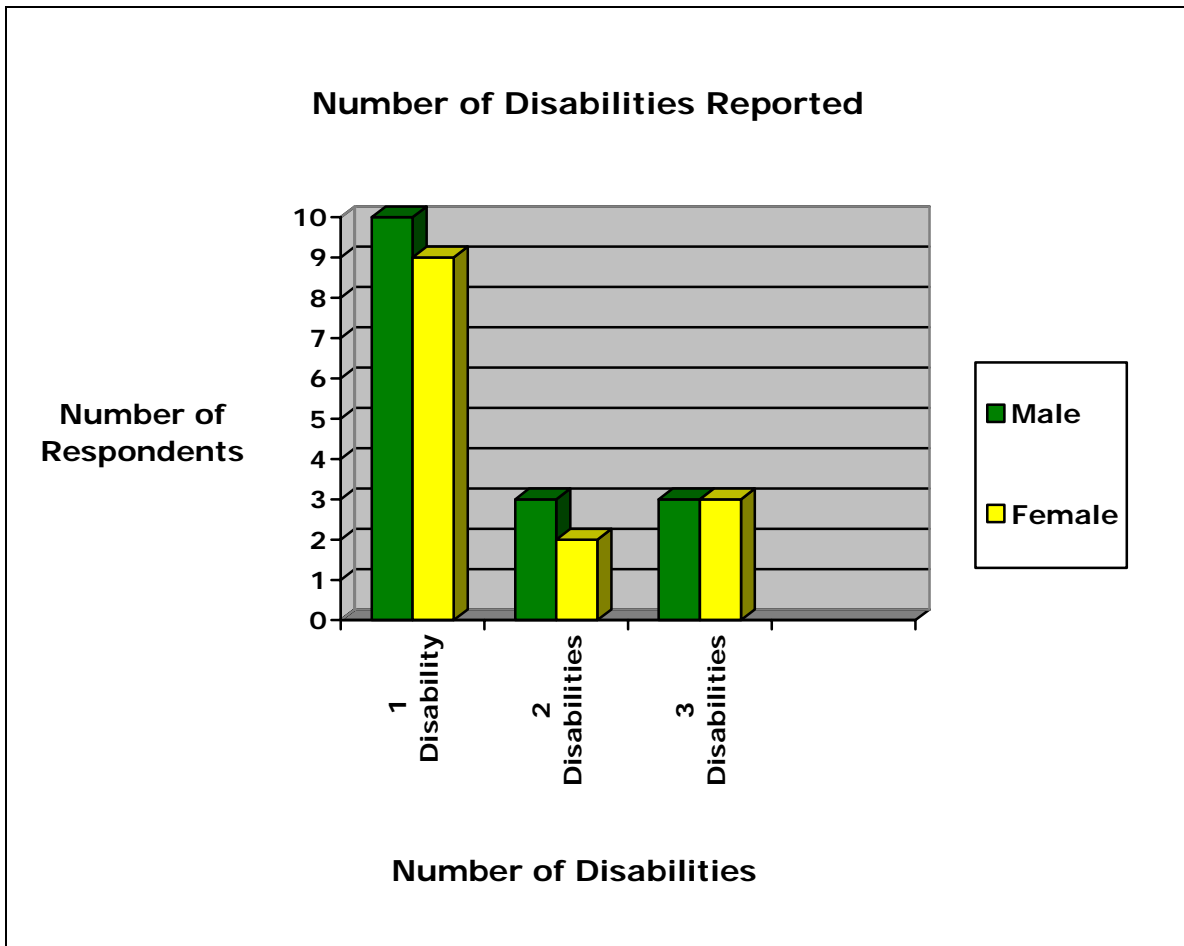
The graph below shows the breakdown of types of disabilities reported by male and female disabled respondents.



Types of other disabilities include, but are not limited to: behavioural, brain injury, fetal alcohol syndrome, cancer, fibromyalgia, chronic pain syndrome, amputee, stroke and cerebral palsy.

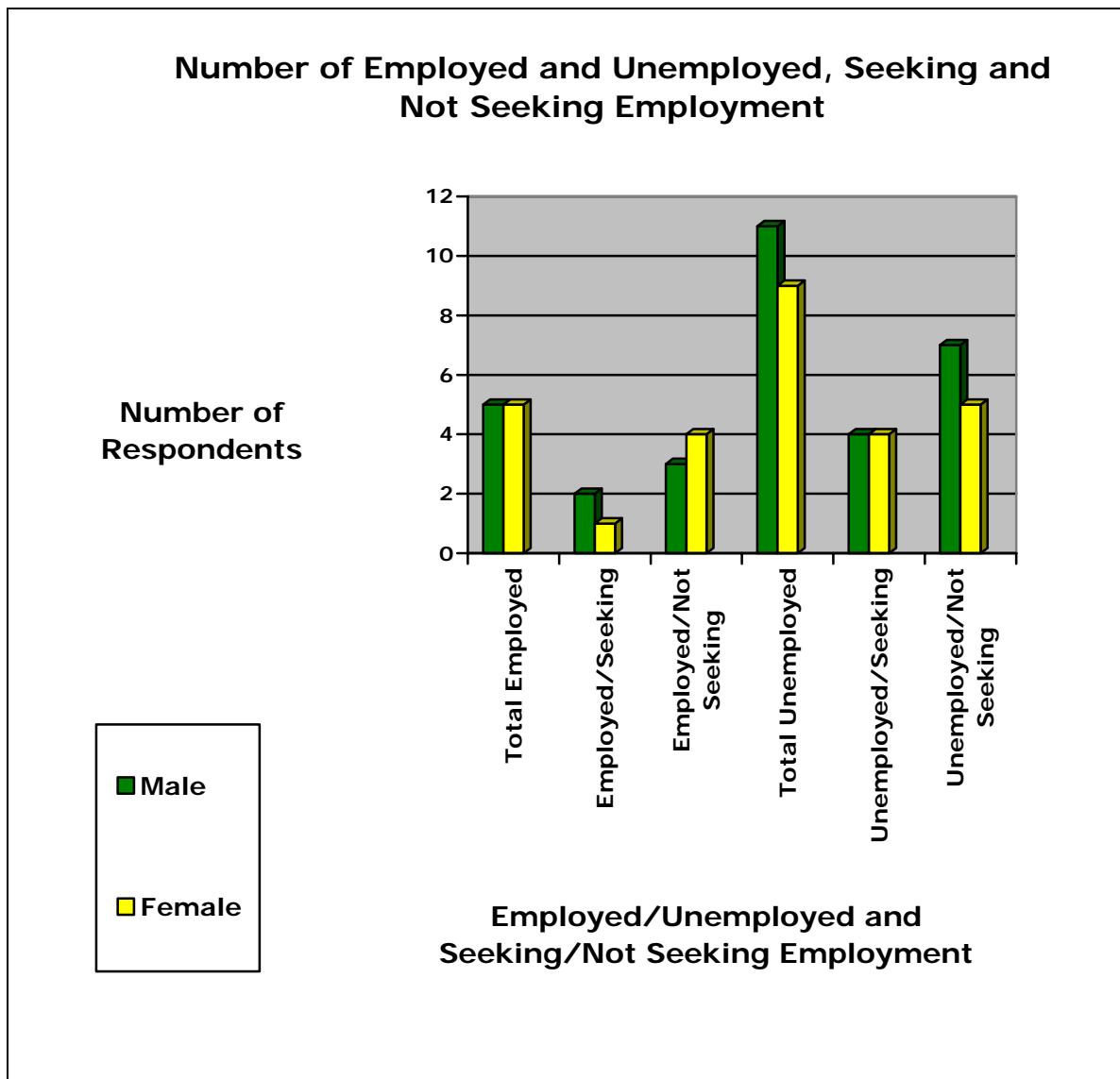
Number of Disabilities

Represented in the graph below is the number of disabilities reported by the 30 disabled survey respondents.



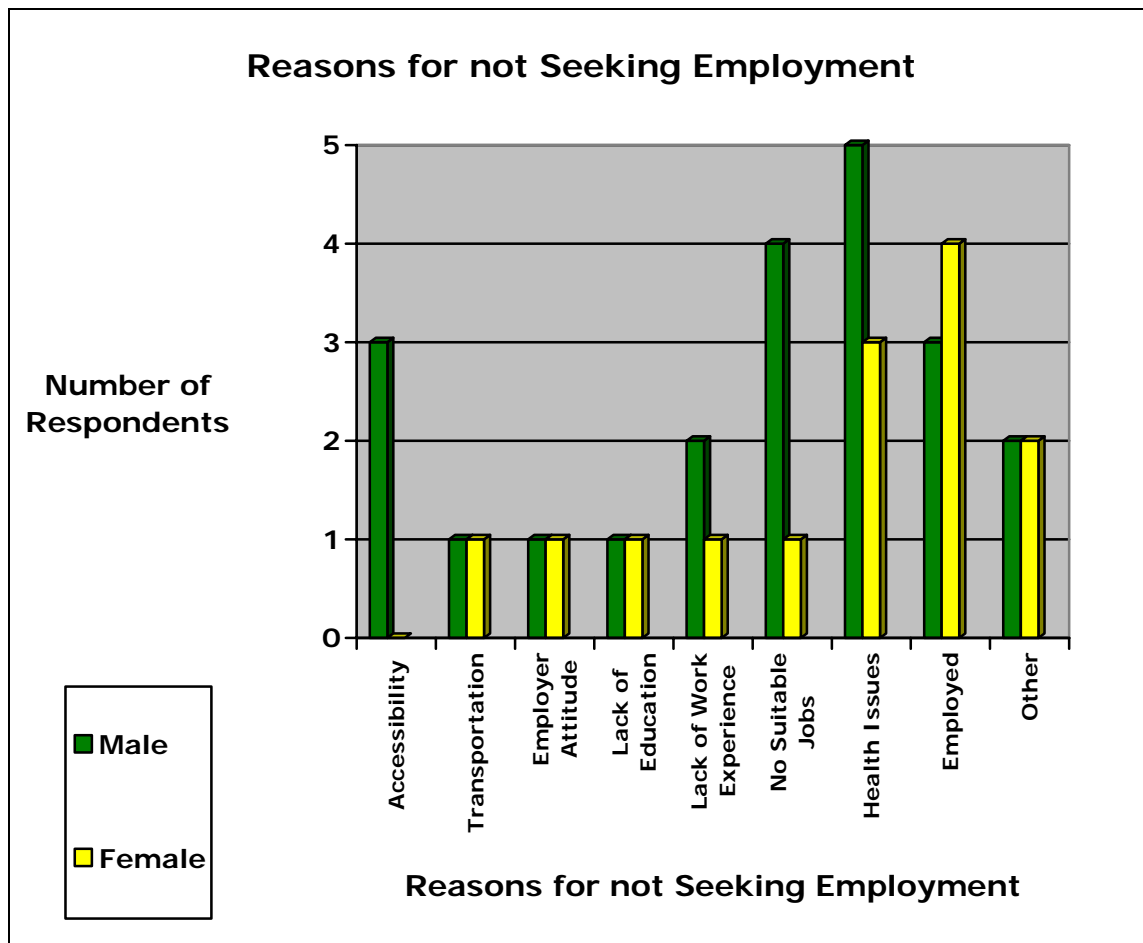
Number of Employed/Unemployed, Seeking/Not Seeking Employment

The breakdown of the number of males and females, their current employment status and whether they are seeking employment is shown in the graph below.



Reasons for Not Seeking Employment

Some of the reasons why 19 of the 30 disabled respondents are not seeking employment are shown, broken down into male and female, in the graph below. Participants were able to choose more than one answer.

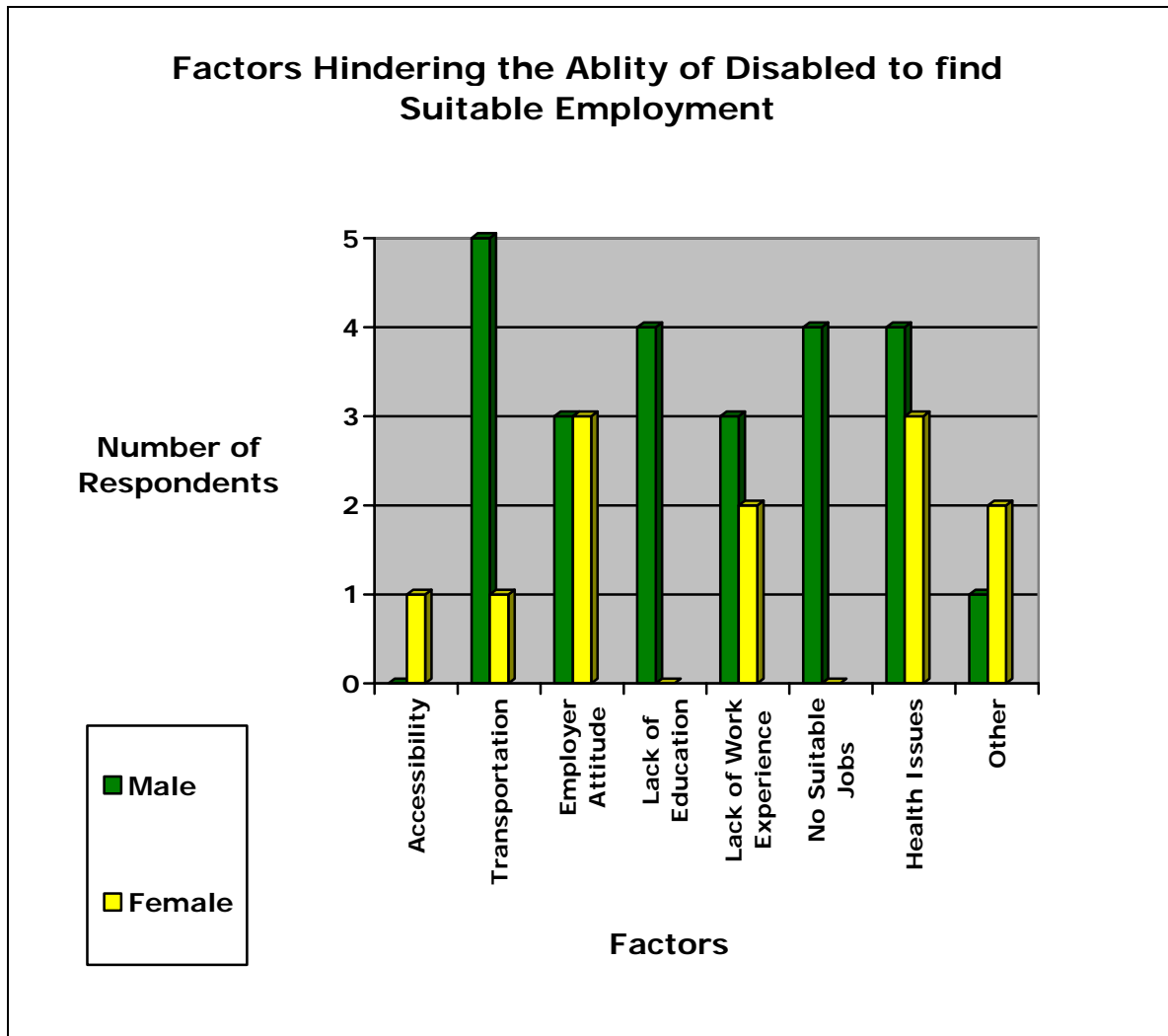


Types of other reasons for not seeking employment include loss of current disability coverage and gave up searching for employment.

The 10 males reported more obstacles when searching for employment, reporting a total of 22 reasons for not seeking employment, an average of 2.2 per male. Nine females reported 14 reasons for not seeking employment, an average of 1.6 per female.

Factors Hindering the ability of Disabled Respondents to find Suitable Employment

Factors that hinder the ability of people with disabilities to find suitable employment are included in the graph below. These statistics reflect information from the 11 disabled respondents, six men and five women who are seeking employment.



Examples of other responses include only being able to work a limited number of hours and the need for low-stress work environments.

As with hindrances to employment, males reported more reasons for not seeking employment. Six males reported 24 reasons, an average of 4.0 per male. The five females reported half the number of reasons as males with 12 reasons, an average of 2.4 per female.

Barriers to Employment - Identified by Disabled Survey Respondents

Health Issues

Health issues are by far the number one concern for all respondents of the survey. Fifteen of the 30 disabled survey respondents reported health issues as a hindrance to their job search or one of the reasons they are not seeking employment.

It is proven that stress can have a negative effect on health. For this reason some persons with disabilities may need modification of job duties to try and remove highly stressful tasks. Two of the five females seeking employment indicated the need for a low-stress work environment.

For a person with a disability stress can mean flare up of symptoms, more doctor visits and possibly even more hospitalizations. However, in *Removing Barriers to Work, Flexible Employment Options for People With Disabilities in BC*, it has been shown that "greater social well-being results in greater self-esteem and self-worth, which in turn reduces the symptoms of illness, leading to even greater social well-being."

No Suitable Jobs

Nine of the 30 disabled respondents stated that a lack of suitable jobs is hindering their job search or one of the reasons they are not seeking employment.

Of the 36 local employers who have not employed any persons with disabilities, 16 stated their type of work is not suitable for disabled workers.

Some of the comments of these 16 employers on why the work is unsuitable for disabled workers include:

- "Some job requirements may be difficult depending on disability."

- "Our work is fast-paced, demanding and physically challenging."
- "Physical disabled is not an issue – development disabled is, heavy courses to take and pass, huge responsibility."
- "...staff all have field work components to their jobs. Depending on the disability, this would be challenging."
- "We do heavy repairs which require strength."
- "Dangerous, lots of sharp objects."
- "Heavy lifting, shelving too high, stairs."

In a research report prepared by the Canadian Abilities Foundation titled *Neglected or Hidden: Connecting Employers and People with Disabilities in Canada*, 1,200 people with various disabilities from all regions of the country were surveyed. The results showed that just less than one half (47%) of unemployed respondents agreed there are few jobs in their community.

Transportation

For many disabled, transportation can mean the difference between being isolated at home and being included as a member of the community socially as well as in the labour force.

Of the 11 disabled survey respondents who are currently seeking employment, six reported that transportation is one of the factors hindering their ability to find suitable employment. Two of the 19 disabled respondents who are not seeking employment reported transportation is one of the reasons they are not seeking employment.

As identified in the 2008 Measure Up Quesnel Strategic Plan, some of the challenges for people with disabilities when using local transit such as the bus system and handyDart include:

- **Scheduling:** There is no transit system available in the evenings, thus people with disabilities who want to work have to schedule shifts dependent on transit schedules. This makes evening and night shifts virtually inaccessible to people with disabilities who rely on public transit as their only mode of transportation.

- Length of time for certain routes, especially from West Quesnel to South Quesnel and vice versa, was identified as a barrier to accessing employment opportunities. It takes approximately 50 minutes for this trip. However, if scheduling was changed to accommodate wheelchair users, time would have to be added to every stop to accommodate the possibility of a wheelchair user. This would make the trip even longer, and the driver would waste 10 minutes at each stop if no wheelchair user was requiring service.
- HandyDart is the only means of transportation for many wheelchair users who are unable to use transit or live outside the transit area. Passengers must first register with the system, but registration is free. The hours of operation are between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday, so this affects weekend and evening shift workers. Because the service cannot meet all requests, there is a taxi supplement program available. Quesnel Transit will book a taxi if the handyDart is unavailable due to capacity, or because the trip cannot be completed in a timely manner, and the passenger pays the regular handyDart fare to the taxi company. However, the passenger must be physically able to utilize a taxi cab. Statistics show that on average, handyDart is able to meet all but one trip per day over a monthly period.
- Neither of the two local taxi companies offer service to wheelchair users who cannot transfer from their wheelchair to the taxi. Funding for this may be difficult to secure because they are private businesses.

Discussion with the City's Transportation Manager indicates some of the next steps for local transit in the upcoming 2 – 5 years include:

- Possible schedule changes to provide extended hours for daily service;
- Shorter rides in high-use routes;
- Increased service in South Quesnel;
- A request to B.C. Transit to extend handyDart hours.

In addressing some of the other strategies outlined in the Measure Up Quesnel Strategic Plan, Quesnel Transit continually reviews the location and usage of the current bus stops and shelters. Bus stops

and shelters are also a priority for the City Public Works Department, which ensures they are cleared of snow and ice in the winter.

Employer Attitude/Awareness

Of the 11 survey respondents seeking employment, six reported that employer attitude is one of the factors hindering their ability to find suitable employment. Two of the 19 disabled participants not seeking employment stated employer attitude is one of the reasons they are not seeking employment.

Of the 26 employer respondents who have past or present employees with disabilities, 15 stated there have been minor challenges employing a person with a disability. While some minor challenges were reported, when asked if integrating a disabled employee into their workplace was difficult, 25 of the 26 of employers answered no with the remaining employer responding 'not applicable.' Not one of the employers who have employed disabled persons stated that integrating a disabled employee into their workplace was difficult.

Some of the minor challenges reported by employers include:

- Making sure a disabled employee was located on the main floor and had access to equipment and resources needed to perform his/her duties.
- The need to stay on top of training; may spend more time giving instructions or showing the employee what to do.
- Adjusting hours of work.
- Ensuring that work stations are adjusted accordingly.
- Learning to listen better and have more patience when dealing with disabled employees.
- Reconsider safety issues with regards to the disabled employee.

The 36 employers who have no experience employing the disabled were asked if they would know how to attract disabled applicants. Only 12 indicated they would. Twenty-one employers indicated they would not know how to attract disabled applicants and three did not respond.

Lack of Work Experience

A total of five of the 11 persons with disabilities seeking employment reported that a lack of work experience is hindering their job search. Three of the 19 persons with disabilities not seeking employment reported that a lack of work experience is one of the reasons they are not seeking employment.

Many of the 62 local employer respondents indicated that hiring the best person for the job, disabled or not, is their priority.

Lack of Education

Disabled survey respondents ranked lack of education near the bottom of the list of hindrances to their job search or reasons for not seeking employment, with six of 30 respondents. However, a number of studies show that education is key for persons with disabilities. A *Profile of Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia: Employment, Labour Market Needs and Occupational Projections* found that "while some variation exists between the educational attainment of individuals with and without disabilities in B.C., educational attainment does not appear to be a reason for poor labour market outcomes for persons with disabilities."

Promising Practices in Employability for People with Disabilities (EAPD) Funded Programs and Services, a review undertaken by the federal government and five provinces, found that "people with disabilities with higher levels of education are more likely to have work-related training and be employed." It goes on to state "the role of education in assisting people with disabilities in trying to get and stay in the paid labour market cannot be over-emphasized."

As indicated by comments from employer respondents, most want someone who has the skills to do the job, disabled or not. Studies show that, as with the general population, the higher the education, the higher the income.

British Columbians with disabilities have education levels similar to that of their able-bodied counterparts.

Accessibility

Surprisingly, accessibility is at the bottom of the list of concerns for disabled survey respondents. According to survey results, accessibility is far more of an issue for employers than disabled job seekers. Only one of the 11 disabled respondents seeking employment stated that accessibility was a hindrance. This is interesting considering that six of these people reported mobility as one of their disabilities. Three of the 19 people not seeking employment reported that accessibility is one of the reasons they are not seeking employment.

By contrast, 14 of the 36 employers who have not employed anyone with a disability cited accessibility as one of the reasons. Seven of these 14 employers reported that funding would help this issue, six reported that funding would not help and one employer did not state whether funding would help with accessibility issues.

Accessibility in Quesnel continues to be a barrier for persons with disabilities. Access to business, affordable housing, transportation and recreation are all factors in determining quality of life for disabled persons. Many of the local businesses are in heritage buildings or older buildings that could be costly, and in some cases not even possible, to renovate.

As outlined in the Measure Up Quesnel Strategic Plan, there are some very simple and cost effective ways that employers can make their businesses more accessible to the disabled and senior community.

These include:

- Plan awareness/information presentations to support businesses to become more disability-friendly.
- Develop criteria for a registry of disability-friendly businesses.
- Encourage businesses to keep floors and aisles clear,
- Explore opportunity to recognise a local senior-friendly and disability-friendly business with an annual award.
- Develop a list of identified minor accessibility issues that can be communicated to businesses and be easily resolved.

Some of these recommendations will be addressed at a meeting later in November 2008. The Quesnel Measuring Up Committee will meet

with staff representatives from local business associations, the Chamber of Commerce and the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation to go through some of these strategies and develop a plan for implementation.

Loss of benefits

Although it was mentioned by only two disabled respondents, there are provincial and federal reports that agree that fear of loss of benefits is a barrier to employment for persons with disabilities.

It is important for respondents to be better educated and made aware that even if people are removed from the register, they retain eligibility, and will be entitled to rapid reinstatement if necessary. Persons with disabilities can only earn \$500 per month before it affects their monthly entitlement of \$906 per month. Amounts between \$501 and \$1,406 are deducted dollar for dollar. This could be a disincentive for some to work additional hours even if they are available unless the person can earn more than \$1,406 per month.

Flexible Working Conditions

None of the disabled respondents indicated that flexible working hours, or the lack thereof, would hinder their job search. However, six of the 11 persons seeking employment indicated that flexible hours would be one of the workplace modifications they would need to be able to effectively perform their duties. The need for persons with disabilities to have flexible working hours is reflected in the comments of disabled respondents seeking employment as well as service providers.

Comments such as:

- "...I have to stop to eat and take meds at unplanned schedules."
- "...understanding employer, flexible hours."
- "Flexible hours."
- "Flexible hours, not have to be standing/walking for lengthy intervals."
- "Flexible hours, 3 day max..."
- "Flexible hours, cannot do a job that requires standing for any length of time."

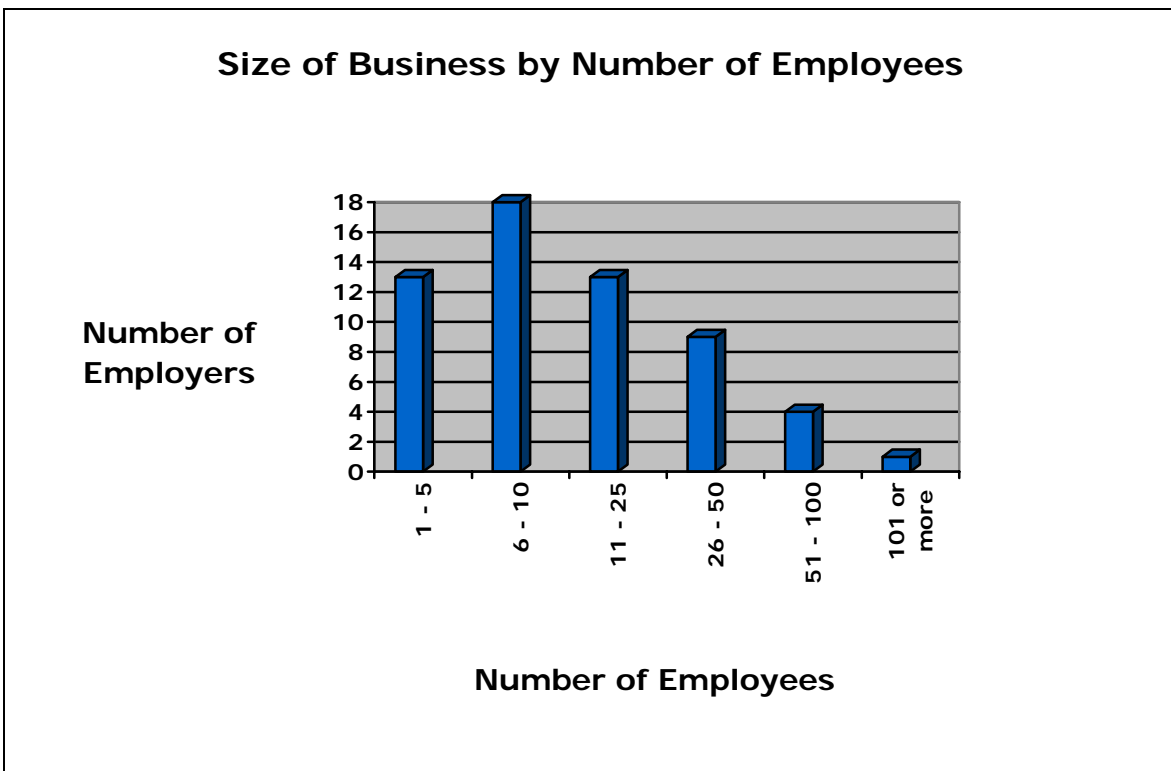
A Profile of Local Employers

Approximately 240 surveys were distributed to local employers. Again, the exact number is difficult to establish because some were sent by e-mail and forwarded to other employers. Most surveys went out by mail to members of the Chamber of Commerce as well as members of the local business associations.

A total of 62 surveys were completed and returned, giving a return rate of approximately 26%. These employers have a range of 1 – 850 employees and represent many types of business sectors in the community.

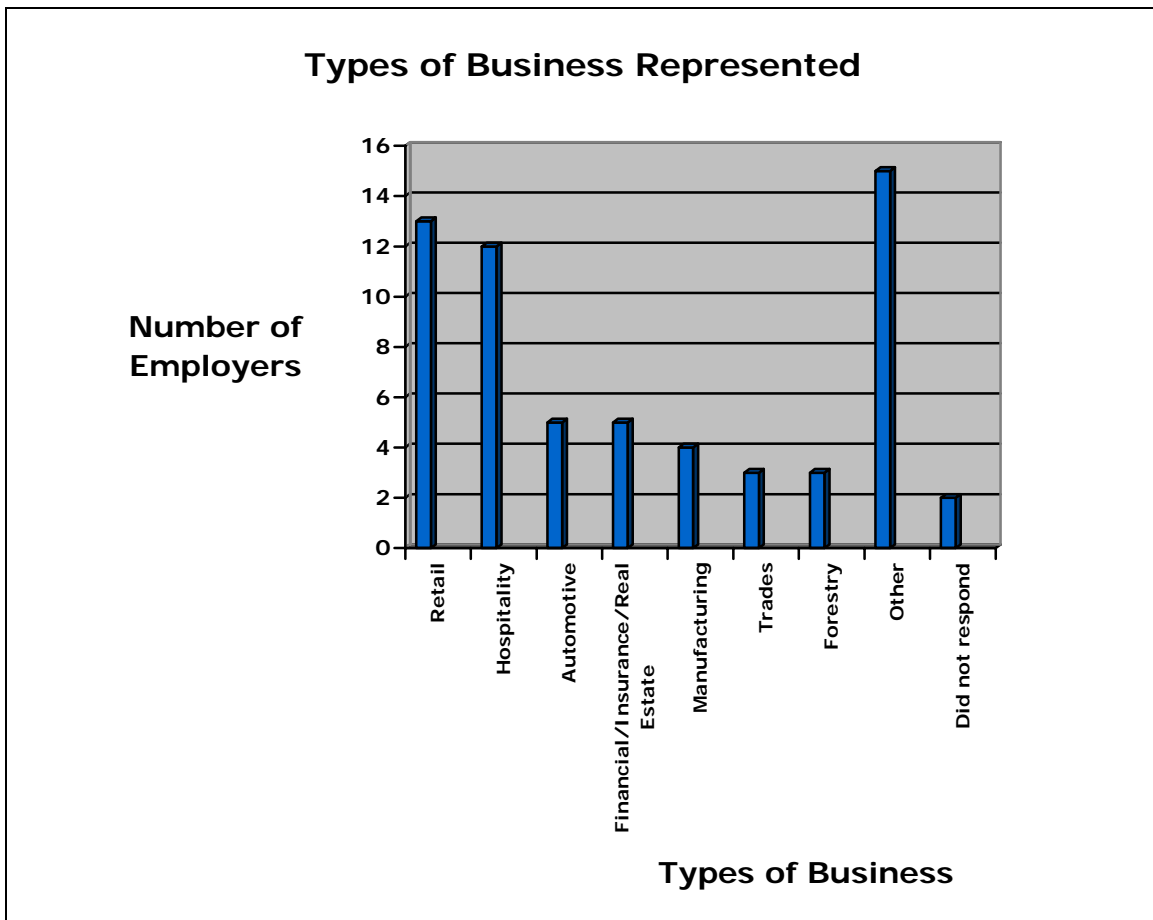
Size of Business

As shown in the chart below, most employers that responded to the survey have 50 employees or less. They represent 52 of the 62 completed surveys. The highest number of employees appears in the 6 – 10 employee range with 18 surveys, the least being 101 employees or more with one survey.



Types of Business

The 62 employers that responded to the survey represent many different types of business. They include, but are not limited to, retail, hospitality, manufacturing, automotive, financial/insurance/real estate, forestry and trades. The types of business and the number of employers they represent are shown below.



Other types of business include, but are not limited to, health, public sector, media, recreation and education.

Experience Employing the Disabled

Of the 62 employer respondents, 26 have employed or currently employ a person with a disability. This falls midway between two other provincial surveys on people with disabilities in the labour market.

In *A British Columbia Chamber of Commerce Survey: Hiring People with Disabilities*, 52% of the 504 employer respondents reported that they have in the past employed or currently employ someone with a disability. In *Recruitment and Retention of Persons with Disabilities in British Columbia*, 520 employers completed surveys with 31% of employers reporting any employees with disabilities.

It should be noted that in *Recruitment and Retention*, employers were asked how many are current disabled employees, while the Chamber of Commerce study and this local study include past and present disabled employees.

Thirty-six local employers reported having no experience employing someone with a disability. However, of these 36 employers, 26 cited having 'no disabled applicants' as one of the reasons they have not employed someone with a disability.

Some comments from employers when asked "What have been the benefits of having a person with a disability in your workplace?" include:

- "Brings a better attitude to all team (employees)."
- "Provided inspiration to other staff members who saw daily someone that was motivated to come to work and be a contributing member of the office."
- "...provides opportunity for other employees to learn better tolerance, conflict resolution"
- "Want to work, consistently show up."
- "...they are devoted, caring and reliable."
- "Good for public image."
- "Greater capacity for empathy and patience."
- "Not everyone is the same, you learn to work with people different from you."
- "Community support."
- "Always on time, willing to go above and beyond."
- "Great worker, respect from other employees and the public."

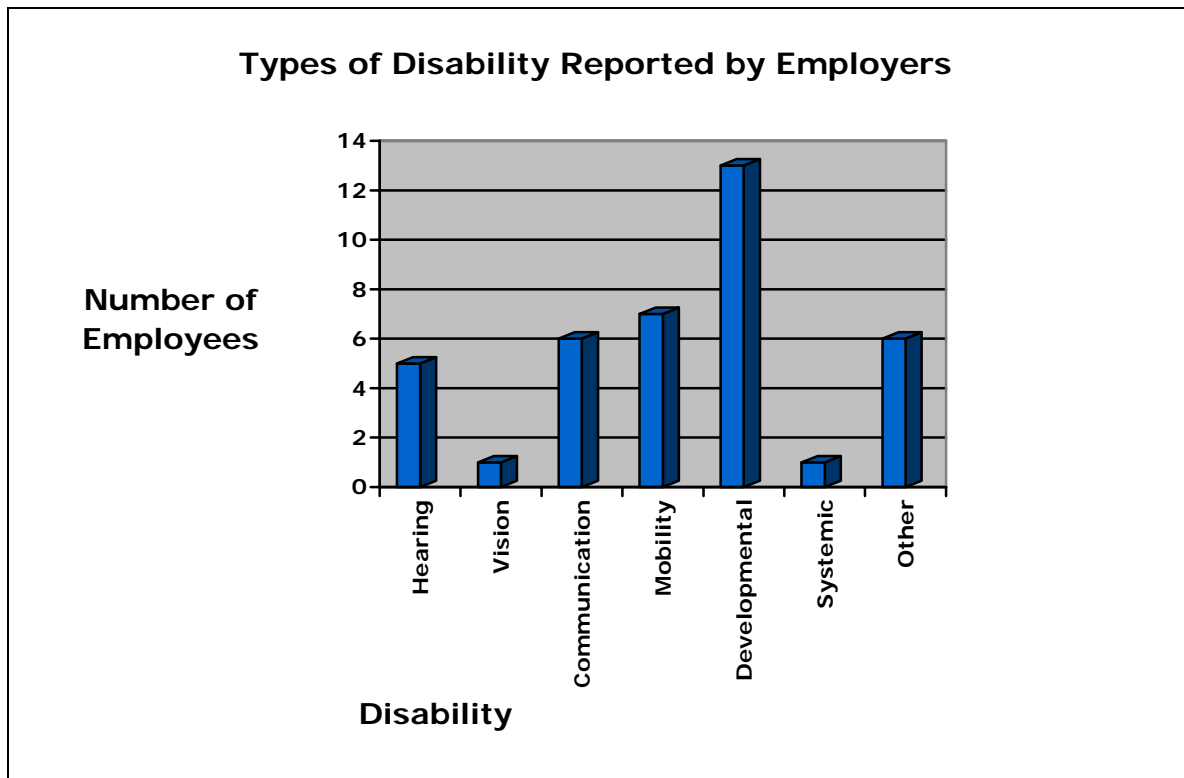
Number of Disabled Employees

Of the 26 employers that have experience employing persons with disabilities, a total of 40 disabled persons are employed presently or are past employees. This number is higher than 40 but one employer was not sure of the number of past and current employees, so only one was entered under past and present numbers. Responses to the rest of the survey for this employer are calculated in with the rest of the completed surveys.

Of the 40 disabled employees, 19 are past employees and 21 are current employees at local businesses.

Types of Disability

Some of the types of disability reported by the 26 employers who have employed persons with disabilities are shown in the graph below. Employers could identify as many disabilities as applied to the disabled person they employed.



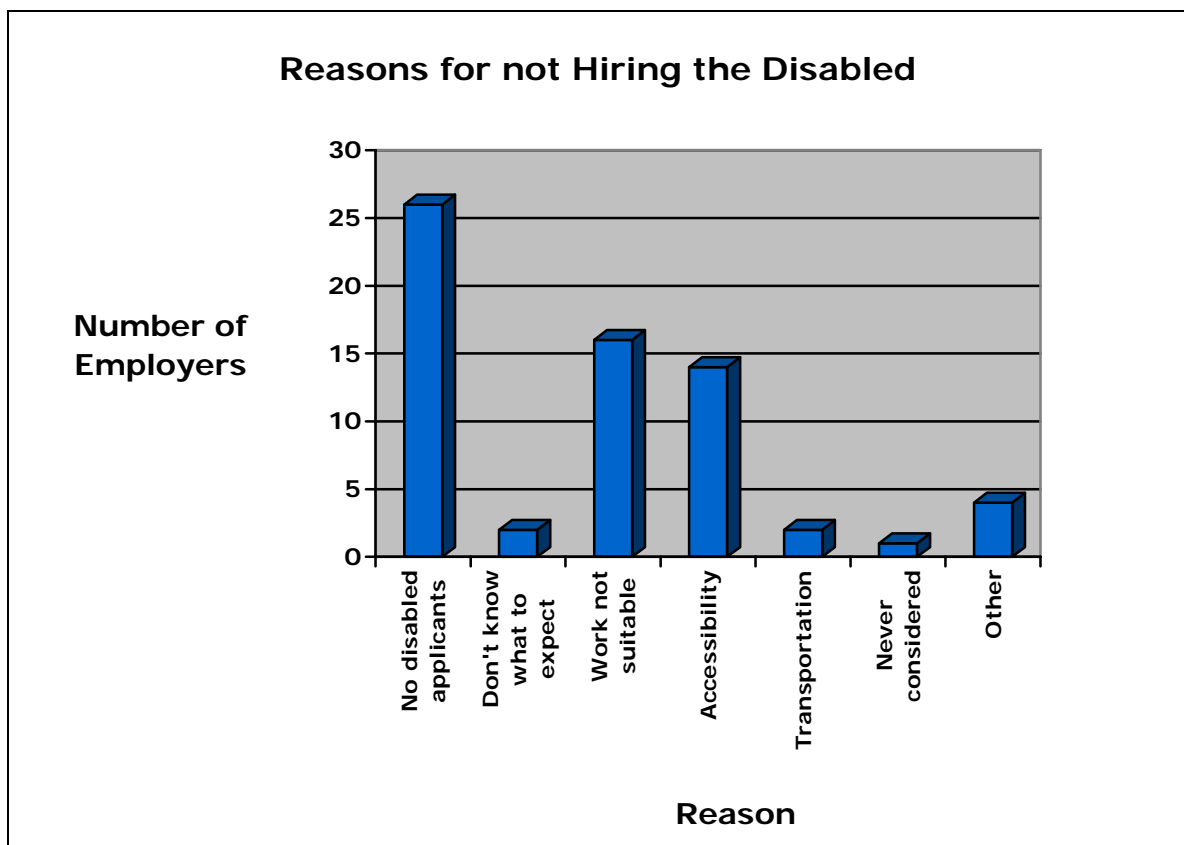
Other types of disabilities include, but are not limited to: disease-related disability, injury from previous employment and some respondents did not specify.

Hours of Work

Of the 40 past and present employees, 22 are full-time employees. A total of 16 employees work part time and two employees are casual workers. The high number of full-time disabled employees as related by employers does not mimic the survey responses from disabled persons seeking employment. Only three of the 11 disabled survey respondents who are seeking employment reported they are looking for full-time employment. The majority are seeking part-time, casual or self employment.

Reasons for not Hiring Disabled Employees

Of the 62 employer respondents to the survey, 36 have no experience employing disabled persons. Some of the reasons employers gave for not hiring disabled employees are shown in the graph below. Employers were able to select more than one answer, if applicable.



Three of the four employers that reported other reasons stated there is not enough work to hire employees.

Targeted Wage Subsidy and Other Funding

All 62 employers that responded to the survey were asked about targeted wage subsidy and funding for workplace modification.

Of the 26 employers that have experience employing the disabled, only four reported having to make any modifications to the workplace to accommodate the disabled person they employed. Modifications include:

- "Ensured employee was on 1st floor. This minimized their use of stairs and ensured the employee was close to the resources needed to do the job."
- "Vision-enhancing equipment, special computer program, braille file tags and phone tags."
- "Days of work, work stations, hours of work, avoid lifting etc."

When asked if they received any funding for wage subsidy or modification, five of the 26 employers indicated they had. Twenty had not received any such funding and one employer was not sure, as the employee was hired by a previous manager.

Of the 36 employers that have no experience employing the disabled, 25 responded they would consider hiring a person with a disability if wage subsidies or funding for workplace modification were available. Six employers stated they would not consider if funding were available and five employers did not respond.

Profile of Service Providers

Through the course of the research phase, discussions took place with a variety of local service providers, including:

- Community Living BC (CLBC)
- Dengarry Professional Services Ltd.
- Quesnel Employment Services
- Prima Enterprises
- Achieve Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities.

Discussions also took place with special needs educators, a Ministry of Housing and Social Development Supervisor and City of Quesnel Transportation and Recreation Managers to obtain information on some of the local services available to disabled persons.

Some of the common barriers to employment for persons with disabilities are identified and included in the next section.

Fear of Loss of Disability Benefits

The link between disability and low income is undeniable. Clients living on PWD (persons with disabilities) designated benefits through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development (formerly the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance) receive \$906 per month. This is substantially below Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut Off of approximately \$1,460.00 per month. However, because people on PWD benefits receive other benefits such as medical, dental and optical coverage, it could be argued that if calculated into the monthly benefits, the gap is not as large as it appears.

JET Program

Almost everyone spoken to in the course of preparing for this reported said the **loss of the JET (Job, Education and Training) Program** through CNC is a huge barrier to employment for persons with disabilities. The program was suspended in June of 2008 due to funding shortages.

School District 28 and the Ministry of Children and Families have good supports for children with special needs. However there is a huge gap in services available to those young adults with disabilities transitioning from high school. The JET program met the needs not only of this group, but also for other young adults in the community. Many young people gained valuable life and social skills, as well as job skills, and many were also successful in securing employment through their work experience.

A report entitled *Removing Barriers to Work, Flexible Employment Options for People With Disabilities*, states that community-based programs working with people with psychiatric disabilities achieved placement rates of 36 to 54 per cent, while programs working primarily with people with developmental disabilities had placement rates of 47 to 81 per cent. In contrast, the ministry's Employment Program for Persons with Disabilities (EPPD) achieved a placement rate of only 12.5 per cent over four years.

The study focused on long-standing, community-based supportive employment and college-based special education programs, such as the local JET Program in Quesnel offered through the College of New Caledonia that was suspended after 18 years.

CNC will work on its budget process soon for the upcoming 2009/2010 school year. A proposal was also submitted at the 2008 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) meetings in Penticton to the Ministry of Advanced Training and Technology as well as other relevant ministries. The proposal is seeking funding that would enable CNC to revive the program or create a new one similar to that of Prince George. The College in Prince George amalgamated the JET Program with TARGET, which is a similar program for learners who may need additional support.

Career Preparation and Personal Planning course

This new course is available, starting in September 2008, through School District 28 and is designed to meet the needs of Grade 10, 11 and 12 students with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) and other developmental disabilities in relation to employment and personal planning skills.

The course contains seven units of study that include:

- Self-awareness
- Life skills related to employment
- Decision making, goal setting and problem solving
- Career awareness
- Job preparation
- Job carving – work experience
- Career Portfolios: A demonstration of skills, attitudes and abilities.

The course was developed by two local special needs teachers, Carol Price and Judy Sewell, to try and fill some of the gap left by the suspension of the local JET Program in June of 2008.

Other issues identified by Service Providers:

The following issues were identified as some of the barriers which are faced by persons with disabilities when applying for jobs.

1. **Stigma of having a disability** – People assume that persons with disabilities are not able to work. The community needs better education and awareness to overcome this barrier.
2. **Motivation** - A couple of service providers mentioned that although their clients may 'talk the talk,' when it comes down to it, many are not motivated. This may be due to various factors (eg. fear of unknown, lack of experience).
3. **Personal safety and safety in the workplace** - In fact, it has been shown that 98% of persons with disabilities rate average or better in work safety compared to their able-bodied colleagues.
4. **Life and social skills** – Some persons with disabilities have issues with life skills appropriate to the workplace. This may include behaviours, grooming, hygiene etc.
5. **Ongoing support/direction/supervision** – Many developmentally challenged employee's experience a gap between what an employer is able to provide and what is actually needed by the individuals.

6. **Job readiness** – Persons with disabilities may need ongoing support. Some may never be capable of working independently, and will need one-on-one support at the workplace. Most programs only offer short-term solutions to this need (eg. limited duration eligibility in the program).
7. **Accessing information on programs and services available to persons with disabilities** – The local Ministry of Housing and Social Development office has an information board for persons with disabilities containing information on programs and services they provide as well as services available to persons with disabilities not on the ministry caseload. As mentioned however, only 20% of persons with disabilities are on the ministry caseload so many may not know how to access this information.
8. **Full-time/Part time work** – Many persons with disabilities may not be capable of full-time work due to stamina, health issues and motivation.
9. **After-hours transportation** – Since most employment programs operate during regular work hours, public transport is not available for those wishing to take advantage of evening or weekend work unless they are able to drive themselves, have family support available, or can afford and physically use a taxi.

Recommendations

At the end of the surveys, opportunity was given to share suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel. Some also provided comments under an 'additional comments' heading.

The importance of one person or one body being appointed to follow through on these recommendations cannot be emphasised too highly. Without clear leadership, the possibility of achieving any sustainable improvement to our current situation will not be possible.

The following recommendations were received from all sources:

1. There should be more cooperation and unified direction between Federal and Provincial agencies, so that persons with disabilities share the same definitions and do not "fall between the cracks". This should include ongoing support without time limits. Currently most programs are only able to offer support for defined periods of time.
2. Research supports the need for a specialist position to be created in Quesnel. This person would be responsible for working with all interested parties to promote and improve the employment of persons with disabilities within the Quesnel area. This would create a holistic approach to the problem. Many of the following recommendations could be part of this person's responsibility.
3. Some communities have special disability advisory committees which consist of resource experts, policy makers, consumers and employers. These committees connect to Regional, Provincial, National and International best practices.
4. The loss of the JET program has had a major impact on persons with disabilities. Not only did this program prepare students with life and behavioural skills, it was also successful in seeking out work experience placements; many students obtained jobs through this program. Every effort should be made to enable this program to return to CNC.
5. It is important to gain the support of unions to open up work experience placements and new jobs for persons with disabilities. Currently many unions are not supportive of having students or persons with disabilities performing work that could be done by union members, even though members may not, in

fact, be employed to perform this work.

6. Quesnel should consider following the example of Abbotsford, and issue a brochure to local employers, outlining the 10 by 10 Challenge, and the benefits of hiring disabled employees. If possible, the Mayor should attach a letter to this brochure.
7. Local employers need to be educated in the myths and realities of hiring persons with disabilities, as well as the business case for employment. Statistics show staff retention is 72% higher among persons with disabilities, saving money and time in recruitment and training costs. There also needs to be more flexibility in employment (e.g., job sharing, part time hours).
8. It's important to celebrate success through local business associations, the Chamber of Commerce and media to make the community aware and foster a willingness to participate among other employers and disabled persons.
9. Quesnel employers need to be more open and create a position for someone with a disability. This need not be a full-time position, but one that can be mutually beneficial.
10. Help must be provided to small business with regard to funding and grant opportunities. Since many have neither the time nor expertise to deal with bureaucratic gobbledygook.
11. Consideration should be given to an accessibility icon route. This should be available in printed form and on web sites promoting Quesnel and would indicate where services to the disabled are readily available (eg. accessible accommodation, restaurants, washrooms, tourist attractions).
12. There needs to be increased partnership among business, government and community organizations to promote, hire and retain persons with disabilities through education and support for employers.
13. Community organizations need to become involved in order to offer volunteer activities as a way for persons with disabilities to gain valuable work skills.

14. More communication between schools, QCLA, CLBC, Prima Enterprises and Dengarry Professional Services may be beneficial.
15. The research indicates that people with development/intellectual disabilities are harder to place than people with physical disabilities because most require some sort of supported employment where there is more direction or supervision. Many employers do not have time to provide this, but the gap could be filled with job coaches or customized/supported employment programs.
16. Businesses should be encouraged to offer incentives other than increased wages for disabled employees which will not reduce their benefit but offer them worthwhile compensation (eg. gas cards, clothing allowance, transit pass, RRSP's).
17. There needs to be a 'one-stop shop' available in Quesnel which could provide information to persons with disabilities on **all** programs and services available to persons with disabilities. A similar initiative has just been opened in Prince George.
18. Persons with disabilities need to be better educated regarding their entitlements. Eligible persons with disabilities receive \$906 per month, plus medical and dental benefits. They may earn \$500 per month without having an impact on this figure, but anything more than \$500 reduces the \$906 dollar for dollar. However, earnings do **not** impact their benefits. Even if they become ineligible due to high wages and employer benefits, they would qualify for rapid reinstatement should this become necessary. They retain coverage for medical and dental benefits as long as necessary.
19. Persons with disabilities should be better educated in the Taxi Supplement Program. This provides taxis during regular handyDart hours when the bus is not available, either because of capacity issues, or because the trip cannot be completed in a timely manner. Passengers pay the regular handyDart fare to the taxi company, and Quesnel Transit will pay the difference. However, passengers must be physically able to use a taxi cab.
20. Persons with disabilities should make themselves known to prospective employers, highlighting their skills and abilities. The

focus should be on **ability** rather than disability.

21. Accessibility is still a problem for some buildings and needs to be addressed. The City should use disabled persons as advisors when making changes or creating new areas within the City. It is important that a wide range of disabilities be represented.
22. There is a recognized gap between current policies and codes and accessibility needs. Planners need to be aware of this and place a high priority on accessibility. Some communities use a sustainability checklist as a way to garner points to move proposed developments forward.
23. Quesnel must find its own customized solution by creating a team incorporating a variety of experts and service providers who can offer one on one solutions to members of the community. By starting small this will then grow so that we achieve inclusion for all.

Appendix A



Employment Experience Questionnaire

This survey is designed to establish a baseline of disabled employee levels in Quesnel. Hopefully, it will provide recommendations for increased access to employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Please complete and return by Friday, October 3 to:

Alison Duddy, Research Co-ordinator
City of Quesnel
410 Kinchant Street
Quesnel, BC V2J 7J5
Confidential Fax: 250-992-1512

If you would prefer to receive this survey by e-mail, please contact me at:

Phone: 250-992-2111 ext.444

E-mail: aduddy@city.quesnel.bc.ca

1. What is your age?

15 to 24	_____
25 to 44	_____
45 to 64	_____
65 or older	_____

2. Are you:

Male_____ Female_____

3. If not disabled since birth, how recent is your disability? _____

4. What is the nature of your disability?

Hearing	_____
Vision	_____
Speech/communication	_____
Mobility	_____
Behavioural	_____
Developmental	_____
Systemic (ie. multiple sclerosis, Epilepsy, HIV)	_____
Other	_____

5. What is your current employment status?

Unemployed _____

Employed _____

Employed, looking for a better job _____

6. Are you currently seeking employment?

Yes _____

No _____

Please answer questions 7–15 ONLY if you are seeking employment (employed or unemployed).

7. Are you looking for full-time, part-time, casual or self-employment?

Full-time _____ Part-time _____ Casual _____ Self _____

8. Does your disability limit how many hours you are able to work?

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, how does this impact your standard of living? _____

9. How long have you been looking for employment? _____

10. What type of employment are you looking for? _____

11. Considering your skills, education and work experience, how do you rate your qualifications for the positions you are seeking?

Over qualified_____ Under qualified_____ A good match_____

12. What job search strategies are you using or have you used in your job search? Check all that apply.

Employment services _____

Newspaper/radio ads _____

Personal contacts/friends _____

Community disability organizations _____

Internet _____

Other _____

13. Do you need any workplace modifications or accommodations in order to effectively do your job (ie. flexible hours, assistive aids, wheelchair access)?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, what do you require? _____

14. What factors hinder your ability to find suitable employment? Check all that apply.

Employer attitudes _____

Accessibility issues _____

Transportation issues _____

Lack of education _____

Lack of work experience _____

No suitable jobs _____

Health issues _____

Other _____

15. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please answer questions 16-20 ONLY if you are employed.

16. How did you find your current position?

Employment services	_____
Newspaper/radio ads	_____
Personal contacts	_____
Community organizations	_____
Internet	_____
Other	_____

17. Do you think your qualifications are a good fit to the job you are doing?

Yes_____ No_____

If no, why not? _____

18. How long have you been employed in your current position? _____

19. In your opinion, are there other opportunities for disabled persons within the organization/company that you work for?

Yes_____

No_____

If yes, please indicate type(s) of job(s). _____

20. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please answer questions 21 - 23 ONLY if you are not seeking employment.

21. What is the reason that you are not seeking employment? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Employer attitudes | _____ |
| Accessibility issues | _____ |
| Transportation issues | _____ |
| Lack of education | _____ |
| Lack of work experience | _____ |
| No suitable jobs | _____ |
| Gave up | _____ |
| Health issues | _____ |
| Other | _____ |

22. Is there anything that can be done to encourage you to enter/re-enter the workforce?

23. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:



Family Member Questionnaire

This survey is designed to establish a baseline of disabled employee levels in Quesnel. Hopefully, it will provide recommendations for increased access to employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Please complete and return by Friday, October 3 to:

Alison Duddy, Research Co-ordinator
City of Quesnel
410 Kinchant Street
Quesnel, BC V2J 7J5
Confidential Fax: 250-992-1512

If you would prefer to receive this survey by e-mail, please contact me at:

Phone: 250-992-2111 ext.444
E-mail: aduddy@city.quesnel.bc.ca

1. What is your role in supporting the disabled person? _____
2. What is their age?

15 to 24	_____
25 to 44	_____
45 to 64	_____
65 or older	_____
3. Are they:

Male_____	Female_____
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4. If not disabled since birth, how recent is the disability? _____

5. What is the nature of the disability? Check all that apply.

Hearing	_____
Vision	_____
Speech/communication	_____
Mobility	_____
Behavioural	_____
Developmental	_____
Systemic (ie. multiple sclerosis, Epilepsy, HIV)	_____
Other	_____

6. What is their current employment status?

Unemployed	_____
Employed	_____
Employed, looking for a better job	_____

7. Are they currently seeking employment?

Yes_____	No_____
----------	---------

Please answer questions 8-17 ONLY if they are seeking employment (employed or unemployed).

8. Are they looking for full-time, part-time or casual or self-employment?

Full-time_____	Part-time_____	Casual_____	Self_____
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9. Does their disability limit how many hours they are able to work?

Yes_____	No_____
----------	---------

If yes, how does this impact their standard of living? _____

10. How long have they been looking for employment? _____

11. What type of job are they capable of doing? _____

12. What job search strategies are they using or have they used in their job search?
Check all that apply.
- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Employment services | _____ |
| Newspaper/radio ads | _____ |
| Personal contacts/friends | _____ |
| Community disability organizations | _____ |
| Internet | _____ |
| Other | _____ |
13. Do they need any workplace modifications or accommodations (ie. flexible hours, assistive aids, wheelchair access)?
- If yes, what would they be? _____

14. What factors hinder their ability to find suitable employment? Check all that apply.
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Employer attitudes | _____ |
| Accessibility issues | _____ |
| Transportation issues | _____ |
| Lack of education | _____ |
| Lack of work experience | _____ |
| No suitable jobs | _____ |
| Health issues | _____ |
| Other | _____ |

15. Have they ever been involved in any work placement or job training programs?

Yes_____

No_____

If yes, please specify where, how long, outcome etc. _____

16. What type of support has been available through school or college? _____

17. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please answer questions 18-22 ONLY if they are employed.

18. How did they find their current position?

Employment services	_____
Newspaper/radio ads	_____
Personal contacts/friends	_____
Community disability organizations	_____
Internet	_____
Other	_____

19. Do you think their skills and qualifications are a good fit to the job they are doing?

Yes_____ No_____

20. How long have they been employed in their current position? _____

21. If you know, are there other opportunities for disabled persons within the organization/company that they work for?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please indicate type(s) of job(s). _____

22. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please answer questions 23-25 ONLY if they are not seeking employment.

23. What is the reason they are not seeking employment? Check all that apply.

Employer attitudes	_____
Accessibility issues	_____
Transportation issues	_____
Lack of education	_____
Lack of work experience	_____
No suitable jobs	_____
Gave up	_____
Health issues	_____
Other	_____

24. Is there anything that can be done to encourage them to enter/re-enter the workforce?

25. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:



Employer Questionnaire

This survey is designed to establish a baseline of disabled employee levels in Quesnel. Hopefully, it will provide recommendations for increased access to employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Please complete and return by Friday, October 3 to:

Alison Duddy, Research Co-ordinator
City of Quesnel
410 Kinchant Street
Quesnel, BC V2J 7J5
Confidential Fax: 250-992-1512

If you would prefer to receive this survey by e-mail, please contact me at:

Phone: 250-992-2111 ext.444

E-mail: aduddy@city.quesnel.bc.ca

Company Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Type of Business: _____

Total number of employees: _____

1. Have you ever, or do you currently employ anyone with a physical or developmental disability?

Yes_____

No_____

If yes, please answer questions 2–14. If no, please answer questions 15–20.

2. How many disabled persons have you employed or do you currently employ?

Past_____

Current_____

3. What is the nature of the disabilities? Please check all that apply.

Hearing	_____
Vision	_____
Speech/communication	_____
Mobility	_____
Behavioural	_____
Developmental	_____
Systemic (ie. multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, HIV)	_____
Other	_____

4. Does (did) this person work full-time, part-time or casual?

Full-time_____ Part-time_____ Casual_____

5. If part-time or casual, is (was) this due to their disability?

Yes_____ No_____

6. Did you specifically target a person with a disability for the position?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, how did you target them? _____

If no, how did the person hear about the opportunity (if you know)? _____

7. Have you ever enlisted the aid of local employment agencies or organizations in finding suitable job applicants (disabled or able-bodied)?

Yes_____ No_____

8. Did you have to make any modifications to the work space to accommodate this employee?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, what modifications did you make? _____

9. Did you receive any funding for work space modification or wage subsidy?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, how did you hear about available funding? _____

10. How have other employees responded to working with this person? _____

11. Have there been any challenges working with a disabled employee?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please elaborate. _____

12. Was it difficult to integrate this person into your work place?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please describe why. _____

13. What have been the benefits of having a person with a disability in your work place?

14. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Please answer questions 15-21 ONLY if you have never employed disabled person.

15. Why do you think you have not employed any disabled persons? Check all that apply.

No disabled applicants _____

Don't know what to expect hiring the disabled _____

Work not suitable for disabled person _____

Accessibility issues _____

Transportation issues _____

Never considered _____

Other: _____

16. If work is not suitable, please describe why. _____

17. If accessibility is an issue, would funding help?

Yes_____

No_____

18. If you were looking to specifically hire a person with a disability, would you know how to attract applicants?

Yes_____

No_____

19. What would motivate you to hire a person with a disability? _____

20. If wage subsidies and/or funding for work place modification were available, would you consider hiring a person with a disability?

Yes_____

No_____

21. Do you have any recommendations/suggestions on how to increase the number of disabled workers in Quesnel?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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