



FYI Viable Calgary

www.viablecalgary.ca

WHO Viable Calgary

WHERE Calgary, Alberta

WHEN 2008

WHAT A workforce initiative focused on assisting employers increase their engagement of employees with disabilities.

HOW Viable Calgary's team of workforce consultants provides to industry associations and job placement agencies the information, tools and resources required to attract and retain employees with disabilities.

WHY Faced with an aging population and a declining birth rate, the province of Alberta has had to think on its feet in terms of beefing up its labour market. "There is definitely a need to engage underutilized labour forces that exist here in order to fill those gaps," says Barry Trischuk, Viable Calgary's workforce consultant coordinator. "And one of those underutilized labour forces is persons with disabilities."

HOW-TO The workforce consultants at Viable Calgary have developed a step by step process for employers to use to incorporate persons with disabilities into their diversity definition and hiring and retention strategies. And it all starts with a readiness survey.

WHAT'S IN A WORD? Part of the survey includes the question: How do you define 'disability'? The answer to this key question gives Viable Calgary the chance to help employers increase their definition of disability beyond the traditional physical or mental assumptions.

MYTH Anyway you look at it, employing a person with a disability will probably add up to more absenteeism. In other words, employees with disabilities are high maintenance.

REALITY CHECK The reality is employees with disabilities routinely post productivity and retention rates higher than the average for persons without disabilities.

WHAT'S NEXT? Based on survey responses, the Viable Calgary team develops a 5-step workforce inclusion plan that includes, for instance, the business case for hiring persons with disabilities and, as Trischuk explains, "speaks about things like having a workforce that's representative of your customers."

AT WHAT COST? The myth persists that the accommodations required for employees with disabilities simply cost too much.

REALITY CHECK The reality is less than ¼ of employees with disabilities need accommodations and about 70% of those accommodations cost less than \$500. Most are tax deductible and funding is available.

BOTTOM LINE "When we share best practices between employers," Trischuk explains, "the employers who have actually gone down the road of providing accommodation have stated that the investment of accommodation is small, (and) the return on investment is high." And that's just icing on the cake when you consider that Viable Calgary's services, which are funded by both the federal and provincial governments, are free to interested Calgary employers. **D!**

