

## Firms' attitudes towards disabled improving: poll

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Most members of the B.C. Chamber of Commerce would consider hiring a person with a disability, according to a recent survey conducted by the chamber.

"A lot of times, employers have biases about [hiring] people with disabilities," chamber president and CEO John Winter said in an interview. "But our research suggests the costs of accommodation are far less than some employers think."

Winter said another factor is that employers are experiencing a shortage of skilled workers in B.C. "So, they're looking at other options that they hadn't in the past."

According to the survey, 69 per cent of respondents said they'd consider hiring a disabled person and 79 per cent agreed with the statement that "persons with a disability represent a qualified, but largely untapped pool of potential job applicants."

The telephone survey of 506 businesses was conducted over two weeks in October 2006.

Phyllis Knudsen has osteoarthritis in both knees, a disability that means she can't sit or stand too long in one place throughout the day and prevents her from walking great distances.

With the assistance of Triumph Vocational Services, which helped her with a resume and narrow down the types of jobs she could do, Knudsen found work with False Creek Design of Vancouver.

Knudsen said in an interview that the chamber survey results bode well for people with disabilities. "Perhaps, people are more open-minded now. Disability prevents you from doing some things, but it doesn't prevent you from doing a lot of things."

There are currently 300,000 working-age people with disabilities in B.C., a chamber news release stated.

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