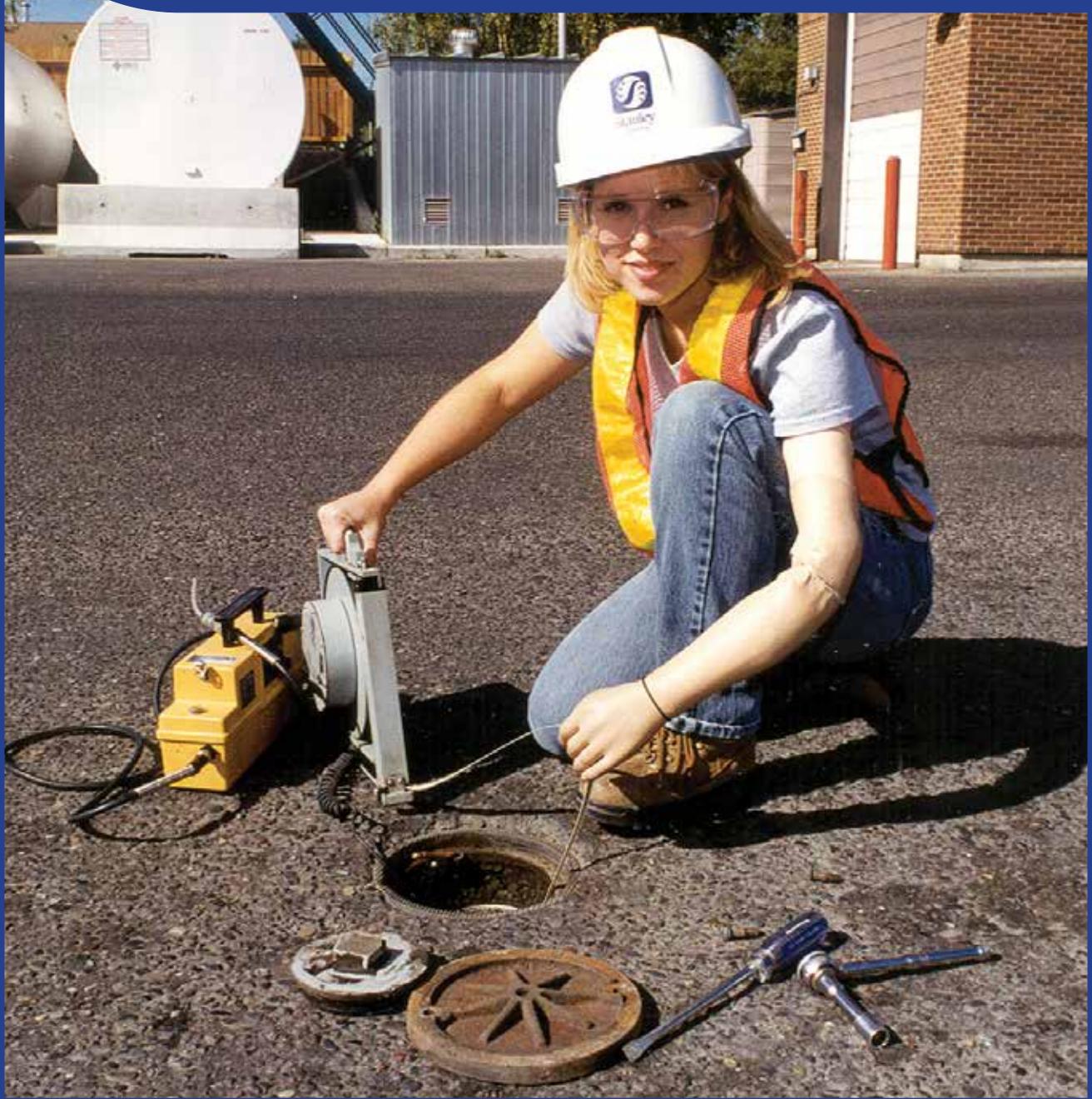




The War Amps

Amputees in the Workforce



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Introduction

This booklet is based on the experience of members of The War Amps CHAMP Program.



Tom, a CHAMP Graduate, worked hard to make his dream of being a pilot come true. Tom learned to use his artificial hand to operate the cockpit controls and is now a pilot for a major Canadian airline.

Regardless of whether you are an amputee or not, the first thing to remember is that looking for and finding a rewarding position requires personal motivation. Without motivation, you tend to become discouraged and give up too quickly. Instead, you need a strong sense of self-esteem and to be enthusiastic, cheerful and confident. You need to believe that you deserve the job you are seeking and that you will do it well.

Employers look for employees with a productive attitude and who have something to offer. Attitude is perhaps the one thing that no one and no circumstance in your life has control over but you.

A flexible attitude, the ability to adjust and put people at ease are important. By showing that you have adjusted to your amputation, you will feel comfortable with yourself, and in turn, you will help make an

employer feel comfortable too. A prospective employer needs to see that you have come to terms with your amputation and, despite any limitations, you lead a very satisfying life.

Everyone, when job hunting, has a fear of rejection. Fear of rejection can often result in a failure to take action. However, there is always the risk of rejection in any new thing that you try. Be assured that through one of the many opportunities you explore, you will find the job and employer that's right for you.

As you start your job search remember to determine what will motivate you, be realistic about your abilities, have a productive attitude, make adjustments where necessary, and always be willing to take a chance.

Part I – Choosing a Career

What Type of Job(s) Should I Apply for?

Your amputation should be taken into consideration throughout your job search. You should be aware of your physical limitations, but you should also consider what you can offer an employer and what you would enjoy doing.

When determining the type of job you will search for, you should consider:

- What kind of job do I want?
- What do I like to do?
- What do I do well?
- What are all my options?
- What can I realistically do?

You should be realistic in pursuing job opportunities. By applying for jobs that are simply unattainable for you, you are setting yourself up for failure. Instead, look at your talents, skills, aptitudes and limitations and determine what you can, realistically, do well. By furthering your education, more job opportunities are open to you and more choices are available. Therefore, when considering the type of job you would like to do you must also determine the schooling required for that job.

Also assess how the following apply to you: your work values; your personal values; your interests and personal traits; and your skills. It would help you to conduct a self-assessment in order to determine what jobs you are able to do well. Job searching will be a more rewarding experience if you have spent some time assessing your interests and your skills.

After you do a self-assessment, you will be better able to answer these questions:

- What do I want most from work?
- What is important to me?
- What do I like to do best?
- What are my personal traits?
- What are my skills and aptitudes?

- What are my true abilities?
- What am I willing to trade to get what I want most?

There are many self-assessment tools available. They can be explored at your school or local universities and colleges. Assessing your abilities and skills helps you handle interview situations. Experts say that 90 per cent of the people that employers interview do not adequately describe the skills that they possess that would enable them to do the job. You will be ahead of the game if you assess and know how to describe yours.

There are several types of skills to look at:

- **Good worker skills** allow you to adapt to situations in many jobs, such as getting along with others, and being honest.
- **Functional skills** are general skills useful in a variety of jobs, such as managing money or supervising others.
- **Technical skills** are those that apply to a specific job or occupation.

Skills are the abilities that people currently possess. Aptitudes are different, but equally important. Aptitudes are your potential to do or perform a task well (i.e., it comes easily and naturally to you). Your aptitudes can be polished and perfected into skills. Even when you lack an aptitude for a task, you can still acquire the necessary technical skills. However, to do something exceptionally well, it helps to have both an aptitude and the skill.

What Are Job Clans?

For every job, there are many other jobs associated with it – these are called job clans. If you are unable to do a certain job that you are interested in, job clans allow you to consider other options in that field that might be of equal or even more interest to you. For example, a concert violinist whose left arm was amputated as a result of cancer. She might be able to change careers and become a composer or an arranger or maybe even a great teacher or music therapist.

Job clans can be further broken down into job families and job clusters. Job families would be like your immediate family members, those closest to you including your brothers and sisters, whereas job clusters would include not only your brothers and sisters but cousins, aunts, and uncles. In practice, what this means is that if your first career choice is not possible, you should start looking in job families or jobs closely related to your initial choice. If there is no suitable occupation at that level, then you should explore the broader job clusters of associated areas.

By researching the many types of occupations in a certain area, you will be able to be more realistic about what you can do and choose more wisely. To forgo your first career choice is not necessarily a bad thing; perhaps your second or third choices could prove to be even more satisfactory than your initial choice. You may think that there is one right career for you. Career counsellors, however, often say that people would be equally happy in more than half a dozen occupations. Therefore, you should explore all your options.

Amputees and Technology

Technology is constantly changing and will continue to affect the workforce. Computer technology is used more and more. Computer programmers and systems analysts are occupations that immediately spring to mind, but computers are also used in many other areas – from creating newsletters (desktop publishing), designing buildings (CAD CAM software), managing large amounts of information through a database, to designing websites on the Internet, to name just a few.

An employer will not be uncertain of an amputee's abilities if the amputee is proficient in computers – instead they will seek out the amputee for their skills.

What About Part-time Employment or Volunteering?

Job searching in today's economy is very tough, regardless of whether or not you are an amputee. Due to our changing economy and the trend toward downsizing, many people count on part-time, temporary, casual, and contract working arrangements. Some people think that taking such jobs is not sticking to their goal of finding a permanent job in a specific area of their interest, but many people look at these



Annae attended a CHAMP Seminar with her husband, Gareth.

opportunities as great stepping stones to the position they really want. Such jobs also provide invaluable working experience that can only add to your skills and qualifications for future positions.

Where Should I Look for Employment Opportunities?

There are numerous approaches to finding job leads. They are:

- Personal contacts and networking
- The direct approach
- "Informational" interviews
- Job market services and agencies

Personal referrals are often good to give you an "in" to a job. Your contact list can include: family; friends; neighbours; employers and former employers; coworkers and former coworkers; teachers and former teachers; classmates and former classmates; members of any community groups you're involved with; members of professional organizations; members of social and sports clubs; and basically anyone you deal with on a day-to-day basis.

An excellent way to increase your opportunities is by networking. The book *Tried & True* says that 75

per cent of all job openings are filled without being advertised and are filled mostly through word-of-mouth contacts. The saying “It isn’t what you know but who you know” does apply sometimes.

The direct approach entails visiting, writing to, or calling a company unannounced, when no job position has been posted. Walking in unannounced generally does not work for professional or managerial positions but might work for skilled labour and office support employment. Simply sending a resumé that has not been solicited will generally not prove to be very effective, but telephoning might be effective if you have very good verbal skills and self-confidence.

It is sometimes possible to get informational interviews with companies even when positions are not currently available there. These interviews allow you to get information on the education, training, skills and experience required to do a job; get information on the local labour market; practise your interpersonal and interviewing skills and explore possible job opportunities with the company even though nothing is available right at that moment.

There are many job market services and agencies that you might explore such as: school placement services; public libraries; independent living and rehabilitation centres; public employment offices; private employment agencies; temporary help agencies; database services; job fairs; Internet sites; and volunteering.

Many agencies across the country provide services to persons with disabilities and employers who are interested in hiring people with disabilities. These companies match job seekers with prospective employers, provide job seekers with skills, provide employers with information about government programs and subsidies, and even conduct sensitivity and awareness presentations for co-workers and supervisors. Universities and colleges often have programs and services to assist students with disabilities in their career search.

Whatever approach you choose to take in your job search, it is very important to research each employer to decide whether you would like to work for the organization or business and whether or

not your qualifications would match the employer’s requirements. Knowing as much as you can about the company you are applying to will impress the interviewer and demonstrate that you are serious about the job for which you are being interviewed. You can research employers by: searching the Internet to familiarize yourself with the corporate image and background of the company; networking with friends and relatives who work within the industry or for the company concerned; using stockholder resources; obtaining a job description prior to an interview; reading industry magazines, newspapers; referring to library references and directories; and checking with college career planning and placement offices, and even Chambers of Commerce.

Part II – Application, Resumé, Interview and Job Offer

What Should I Put in My Resumé or Cover Letter?

There are many books and resources available on writing resumés and cover letters. As this booklet's purpose is to address issues specific to amputees, we do not go into detail in this area but offer some basic information.

Some people wonder if a resumé is even required in a job search. It is important to note that a resumé is often your chance to get that first interview. Employers often use them as tools to screen out job seekers, so if you don't have one, you may be counting yourself out.

Most resumés are set up in a chronological or a functional format.

- A chronological format emphasizes your work history. This is a good format if you have an impressive work record.
- The functional format emphasizes your skills and abilities rather than your work experience. This is a good format if you have not had many jobs.

Cover letters, which accompany your resumé, should be tailored for the position you seek.

In the first paragraph, state the job you are applying for.

The second paragraph should highlight your most relevant qualifications and personal qualities for the particular position you are applying for.

And finally, in your third paragraph, you should simply state your desire to meet and discuss the position further.

Your resumé and cover letter should answer the following questions for an employer:

- Can you do the job?
- Do you have a positive work attitude?
- Do you work well with other people?

Your resumé must answer these basics:

- Who are you?
- What job do you want?
- What do you know?
- What can you do?
- What have you done?

Your cover letter, however, should answer these questions:

- Why are you writing?
- What do you want?
- Why are your qualifications of interest to our organization?
- How do you plan to follow up?

When describing your current or previous job responsibilities use strong action verbs and emphasize how your experience matches the requirements of the job you are applying for.

Your resumé should be about two pages long and easy to read. Proofread your resumé to ensure that there are no errors and make sure you send out high quality copies. Do not include the name of your supervisors, salaries, or reasons for leaving former jobs. You may or may not decide to note references on your resumé but you should always take a list of references to your interviews.

When writing your resumé and cover letter, you should focus on the employer's needs, not yours. Show how your qualifications will give the employer what they need to fill the position. Customizing your resumé and cover letter to fit the requirements of each particular job will make your application stand out – it

will sound like there is no job you really want other than the job for which you are applying.

As mentioned earlier, you must decide whether or not to mention your amputation in your resumé. Many people choose not to disclose their amputation before being offered an interview. However, if you have had lots of experience in working with disabled groups, you can be sure that employers will notice this and may speculate that you have a disability yourself (also see **Part IV** on **Disclosure**). You have to weigh the value of including this experience against the risk of leaving it out. If disclosing your amputation in your resumé supports your objective of getting a job, do it; if not, don't.

Note that a curriculum vitae and a resumé are not the same thing, although some people use these terms interchangeably. A resumé is a job hunt document carefully designed to reveal your qualifications for a specific type of position. Whereas a curriculum vitae is a formal, comprehensive biographical statement, which includes an individual's publications and honours. Sometimes, people attach a curriculum vitae to a resumé but, again, they are separate documents.

There are many standard forms of resumés, so we will not get into the specifics of exactly what to include or how to write your resumé. It is a good idea to research this subject by reading various publications on the topic. It is important that you choose the style of resumé that is flattering to your skills, education and previous experience.

It will be up to you to put people at ease by being open and honest. Encourage questions about your amputation and advise of any restrictions that your amputation will place on you or your job. However, your amputation should not become the focal point of your interview. Your background, assets, education, and work experience should be the focal point.

There is no guarantee that once you've briefly mentioned your amputation, (and again that is your choice), a prospective employer will automatically become very accepting. Be prepared to convince a sceptical employer that you can do the job, to educate them and resolve their concerns. For many interviewers, interviewing an amputee may be a new experience and you will need to be their guide. Highlight your skills, accomplishments, capabilities, and the contributions you can make to their company. Alleviate any concerns that to hire you will mean expensive accommodations to the workplace, as this is often a thought that runs through an employer's mind. You simply have to shift their focus from your amputation to the highlights of your skills.

An interview is your chance to show how valuable you are. Do your best and try to be at ease. An interview is really a half an hour or so in which you have to pass or fail. Although this puts a lot of stress on you, it is a reality and, therefore, you need to have superb general interviewing skills. Because you are an amputee, you also need to really assert that you are capable of doing the job. You have to show that your functional limitations will not stand in the way of getting the job done to the employer's satisfaction.

There are many dos and don'ts in handling interviews and you would be wise to research publications to help you out in interviews. A few tips are:

- **Do** a dry run trip before interview day. Ensure you know how to get to the location of your interview and how long it will take to get there.
- **Do** smile warmly and make eye contact and give the interviewer a warm handshake. If you are an arm amputee and you sense some hesitation on the part of the interviewer to shake your hand – extend it without hesitation – this normalizes the situation.
- **Do not** apologize for your disability.
- **Do not** argue even if discriminatory questions are asked – be polite, diplomatic and tactful.

How Should I Approach an Interview?

These days, more and more employers have enlightened understanding of the capabilities of people with disabilities, but some still doubt that a person with a disability will be able to do the job. You, therefore, must discuss your amputation in a positive way during an interview, particularly if your amputation is visible and obvious to the interviewer.

It is always a good idea to rehearse and even film yourself in a dress rehearsal to really feel confident that you are presenting yourself in the best light. The value of practice cannot be overemphasized.

You should dress the part when you go in for an interview. The image you present in the first few minutes of contact with the interviewer goes a long way to determining whether you will be hired. Psychologists call this the “halo effect,” which means that if you excel in one area, even in how you dress, it is assumed that you will excel in others.

Again, for amputees, the big question is how to discuss your amputation in an interview situation. Generally, employers are only permitted to ask questions about your amputation as they relate to essential functions of the job so they can determine whether or not you are qualified to perform them. You will want to thoroughly read the section on **Disclosure** in Part IV of this booklet.

It is unwise to leave an interview if you feel that an interviewer still has concerns about your amputation but hasn't asked the questions, because you simply won't get the job in that case.

There are many myths about workers with disabilities that really must be dispelled during the interview.

- Workers with disabilities cost more to employ.
This is not the case. Both workers with and without disabilities cost about the same to employ.
- Workers with disabilities require costly job accommodations.
Also not true. Most job accommodations cost a minimal amount and sometimes nothing.
- Workers with disabilities are greater safety risks to themselves and coworkers (e.g., a leg amputee or a person in a wheelchair would have difficulty leaving the building in the case of an emergency, such as a fire).
Employers are concerned not only with safety but with liability issues. A simple buddy system, where other employees volunteer to assist you in exiting the building safely, is all that is required.

- Workers with disabilities miss more work.
Again, this is not true and it's up to you to clarify the amount of time you might require for therapy, fittings, etc.

Some job seekers, where they feel that an employer is hesitant, have offered an “extended assessment” of one day. This is simply an offer to work for a day just to see how the person functions in the workplace. Although the length of time, of course, is not sufficient to assess job skills, it does give the employer the general idea of how you will fit in.

What Can I Learn From an Interview?

Always remember that in job hunting, you will need to deal with disappointment. However, being persistent and not giving up until you have succeeded is very important. You need to have realistic expectations but you also have to be willing to learn from rejection. Every time you are passed over for a job, there is likely something you can learn from it. Remember that job hunting is very competitive and you have to persist. Some interviewers may even be willing to discuss what they felt were your strengths and weaknesses during the interview, even if you are not given the job – it is worth a call.

Part III – Employer Prejudice/ Employment Equity

Employer Prejudice

The War Amps organization established its Key Tag Service in 1946 to provide employment to amputee veterans because employers would not hire them. Although the attitude of employers toward amputees has improved, prejudice still does exist today.

However, it is important to realize that an employer's prejudice is *understandable* because he or she likely knows nothing about amputation, has never met another amputee, and has no idea what your capabilities or limitations are. As amputees, we know what our capabilities are, but an employer does not.

Because employers are unfamiliar with amputation and artificial limbs, they understandably are hesitant about hiring amputees. They may fear that amputees will not be able to do the job or that their performance and attendance will be affected. Employers may have liability concerns and fear amputees may injure themselves while on the job.

Amputees who have highly marketable skills, for instance in the high-tech field of computer technology, are less likely to encounter employer prejudice. By possessing these skills, employers will be more interested in your skills than other issues, such as your amputation.

An amputee's attitude is also very important when approaching a company or going for an interview. As amputees, we should be seeking to "open doors" with a positive attitude.

During an interview, you may, at times, be asked inappropriate questions. Sometimes, an interviewer may simply not know any better. It is best to give him or her the benefit of the doubt before concluding that the question is deliberately discriminatory. You can deal with such a question by saying you aren't sure how



to answer the question and ask how the question is relevant to the position you are competing for. If the interviewer can explain how the question is appropriate and related to your ability to fill the requirements of the job, you should certainly answer it. It is important to know your rights, but it is also important to be sensitive to the difference between a discriminatory question and a poorly worded but legitimate one.

If you feel an employer has been deliberately discriminatory, you have the option of contacting your provincial Human Rights Commission. It is, however, up to the individual to determine how far they want to pursue cases of discrimination.

How Does Employment Equity Affect Me?

In researching job opportunities, you may want to become aware of federal and provincial legislation in regard to employment issues. Some companies do have "Employment Equity" or "Equal Opportunity" as part of their description in job postings and advertisements. These groups have special policies to consider hiring qualified persons that traditionally have had problems finding and keeping jobs.

Employment equity refers to federal and provincial acts designed to increase employment opportunities for designated groups. Equal opportunity is a more general term and simply identifies a company as being committed to the employment of people from minority groups. Your provincial government will be able to advise you of any legislation or programs established for the purposes of encouraging employment equity or equal opportunity on a provincial level.

The federal Employment Equity Act, introduced in 1986, applies to the following sectors:

- Federally regulated private sector employers and Crown corporations, each with 100 or more employees
- Federal Departments, agencies and commissions
- The Canadian Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police only upon order of Governor in Council following the development of special regulations

Some disabled people like to make themselves aware of these companies and might seek employment from them directly. These companies are summarized in an annual report by the federal government's Human Resources Development Department.

The Purpose of the Act (1995 Employment Equity Act)

The purpose of this act is to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities by giving effect to the principle that employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences.

The employers to whom the act applies are not required to hire you just because you have a disability or to hire every disabled person who applies for a job. Some amputees have expressed negativity about searching out employment opportunities where employers are specifically looking to hire a disabled person, claiming that they do not want to be hired

to "fill a quota." Others will take advantage of all opportunities to get them into a company, even to fill a quota, and they then prove how valuable they are.

It must be stressed, however, that no matter where you seek out a job your greatest assets are your personal skills, creativity and initiative. Your disability may simply open certain doors for you.

Are There Provincial Laws and Regulations Governing Discrimination?

Yes, there are provincial laws and regulations governing discrimination. Below is an example of two cases recently looked at in the Province of Quebec:

In Quebec in 1998 The Human and Youth Rights Commission appealed two decisions from the Human Rights Tribunal with regard to a female horticulturist and a policeman. The City of Montreal had refused to hire the horticulturist on the basis that her medical exam showed a slight lumbar scoliosis which may have developed into lumbago. The policeman was laid off while still on probation following surgery for an acute ileitis resulting from Crohns disease, a chronic digestive tube disorder, from which he subsequently completely recovered. The employers maintained that the complainants were not handicapped severely enough to call upon the Quebec Charter of Rights and Liberties, but at the same time, confirmed that these same anomalies were reason enough to exclude them. The Court of Appeal concluded that the Quebec Charter of Rights and Liberties protects the handicapped from discrimination even though a particular handicap does not present any functional restrictions. According to the lawyer acting on behalf of the Human Rights Commission, the decision reached by the Court of Appeal clarifies once and for all the meaning we should give to a "handicapped person." The lawyer also concluded that the decision releases the handicapped from having to prove their condition when they wish to appeal. Up until now, they had to show how restricted they were in their work, a somewhat contradictory step as complainants want to convince employers that their handicap does not prevent them from working. "From now on, it will be up to the employer to show that a physical disability prevents a person from working."

Part IV – Disclosure

When Should I Disclose My Amputation?

A big question for an amputee in their job search is deciding if, when and how to discuss your amputation with prospective employers. There is no one *right* way that will work for everyone. Every employer is different and so is every employee. Keep in mind that employers don't hire people just because they have disabilities but hire the applicants who are best qualified for the job. **Whether or not you wish to talk about your amputation in your resumé, cover letter, interview, or even not at all, is entirely up to you. Please thoroughly read this section, however, before you make your decision.**

Some people like to be up front and mention their amputation in their application. Others feel that mentioning their amputation that early poses several risks: the employer will not even give them an interview; the employer may decide up front that the amputation will limit their job capabilities; or the employer may think that costly equipment will be required to employ the person. These people prefer to wait until they go to an interview to divulge they have an amputation. In short, when and how you choose to discuss your disability depends entirely on what works best for you.

Below are nine opportunities to disclose your amputation during the job hunt.

1.Third party referral

When someone you know has referred you for a job, you are very fortunate because people who have third party referrals have an “in” with the prospective employer. The employer will be more likely to listen to what you have to say and may even already know about your amputation.

2. Resumé

If you believe the employer will look at your amputation favourably, you could find a positive way to mention it in your resumé. If, however, there is any chance that an employer will view your amputation in a negative way, do not mention it in your resumé.

3. Cover letter

You should disclose your amputation in your cover letter only if it will affect one of the major responsibilities of the position. If, for example, the job is as a counsellor for people with disabilities, you would want to mention your amputation as it shows you have personal experience to draw on. Don't disclose your amputation in the cover letter just because you believe the company is open to hiring disabled people.

4. Employer calls you for an interview

You may disclose that you have a visible disability, such as an amputation, when the employer calls to ask you to come in for an interview. By waiting to discuss your amputation until after the employer has scheduled a meeting, it is likely that the employer will go through with the interview, as it would be obvious discrimination to make a 180 degree turn and cancel the interview when they've already told you they would like one. However, if the employer did have reservations due to your amputation this would be the easiest opportunity to back out – it is easier to tell someone “no” over the phone than it is face-to-face.

It will also depend on who is calling to set up the interview. If an assistant or a secretary calls, don't disclose your amputation at this time. You want to tell the employer in your own words and not rely on a message being passed on by someone else that could easily get misconstrued.

5. Call to disclose

If an assistant did call to set up the interview and you did not want to mention your amputation to him/her, you might telephone a few days before the interview and speak with the employer directly. You can then let

your employer know about your amputation. Do not just leave a message with the secretary or the assistant as, again, you risk misinterpretation.

Even if the laws state that you do not have to discuss your amputation with a prospective employer, except as it relates to your ability to perform functions of the job, the bottom line is – in many cases – that if you don't explain a visible disability, you probably won't get the job. To get the job you must make the employer comfortable with you and your abilities.

6. Application

In simply filling out job applications, it is not necessary for you to mention your amputation. Often there will be a question "Do you have any physical limitations that would hinder your performance in the position applied for?" If, based on your understanding of the duties, you don't, then you can answer no. If you are not sure whether your amputation will affect your job performance, you can simply write "Will discuss." Of course, if you feel that sharing your amputation will help you get the job, you can mention it if you wish.

7. Interviews – The moment of meeting

Many job seekers wait until the moment they meet at the interview to let the employer find out about their amputation. The only concern to deal with here is that you may take the employer by surprise and he/she may find it hard to move beyond that. It takes a lot of inner confidence and true grit to work through the employer's possible silence, embarrassment and perhaps even hostility if they are resentful about you waiting until this point to disclose your amputation. With a strong personality, however, you can quickly refocus the employer's attention on the interview and your job qualifications. Remember: discussing your amputation during an interview should be a positive and open experience.

8. Interview – Pre-offer

If you're going to need any job accommodations (explained in **Part V**) to enable you to carry out your tasks, then you should mention your amputation in the interview before an offer is made, and discuss the job accommodation(s) you will need.

9. Interview – Post-offer – Pre-acceptance

If your amputation is not visible (such as a below knee amputee wearing pants) and it will not affect any job-related functions or require any accommodations, you can wait until after an offer is made, but before you have accepted it, to let your employer know about your amputation. You have to be careful about the timing, however, as it may backfire since some employers may resent not being told sooner and feel that you were deceitful in waiting until after an offer has been made to mention your amputation.

Some amputees, if they feel that the amputation will not affect their job-related functions or require any accommodations, choose not to mention it at all and that is certainly their prerogative.

It is important to know, however, that disclosure, and the timing of it, can have a tremendous effect on your success in your job search. The question you should ask yourself for each job opportunity you explore is: *Does disclosure of my amputation at this time and in this way support my objectives of getting hired?*

If you have done the proper research on your prospective employers, you will be able to determine when the best time will be to bring up your amputation. You should never lose sight of your goal and that is getting the interview and then getting the offer for the job you want.

Part V – Special Equipment/ Job Accommodations

Will I Need Special Equipment to Do the Job?

It is important to remember that no two people are alike, and neither are their disabilities or amputations. Therefore, when you're looking at adaptive solutions to limitations, you should assume a major portion of the responsibility rather than expecting your employer to come up with the solutions. No one knows better than you what your skills are and what your limitations are.

You should determine whether you will need any job accommodations for the jobs you explore. Some people might think it is up to the employer to determine and provide them but, in fact, employers really expect you to make them aware of possible resources and any accommodations you require. Showing that a few simple accommodations are all you need to do a job will put the employer at ease – otherwise the employer might think that to hire you could be very costly.

An employer's main concern when it comes to job accommodations is their effectiveness and cost. Some larger companies in Canada actually have job accommodation policies and budgets so you might want to check into this when you are applying.

Sometimes, for people with complex disabilities, it is considered an “undue hardship” for the business or employer to take on the total cost of an accommodation. This is rarely the case for amputees though. In cases where there is a high cost to accommodate the employee, the cost is sometimes shared between the employee and the employer. Again, job accommodations for amputees are rarely that costly.

The types of accommodations required by amputees vary. Many amputees require no accommodations whatsoever to do their jobs.

Possible Accommodations for Arm Amputees

- A headphone set so that the sound hand is left free to take notes while on a telephone call.
- Adjustments to a computer for an arm amputee could include using a track ball instead of a mouse which is easier to use with an artificial arm or residual limb.
- An arm amputee working as a bank teller may need all the equipment most frequently used at the wicket on their sound side.
- An office chair with individual adjustable arm rests may also be useful for an arm amputee.
- Special prosthetic computer devices are available to operate a computer key board.
- Special computer keyboards are also available to assist with one-handed typing (e.g., BAT keyboard) or a type with one hand program such as the Half-QWERTY keyboard.

Possible Accommodations for Leg Amputees

- A footstool to rest their feet on to ensure that the artificial limb is not left dangling which will end up being uncomfortable during the day.
- A leg amputee working as a cashier or a bank teller, for example, requiring long hours standing might have a stool nearby to sit on when their legs become tired or a special chair – a cross between a stool and a chair, which is on wheels to enable the person to move around and be at the right height.



Karen uses a telephone headset and a typing device on her artificial arm at work.

Multiple Amputees May Require Additional Accommodations

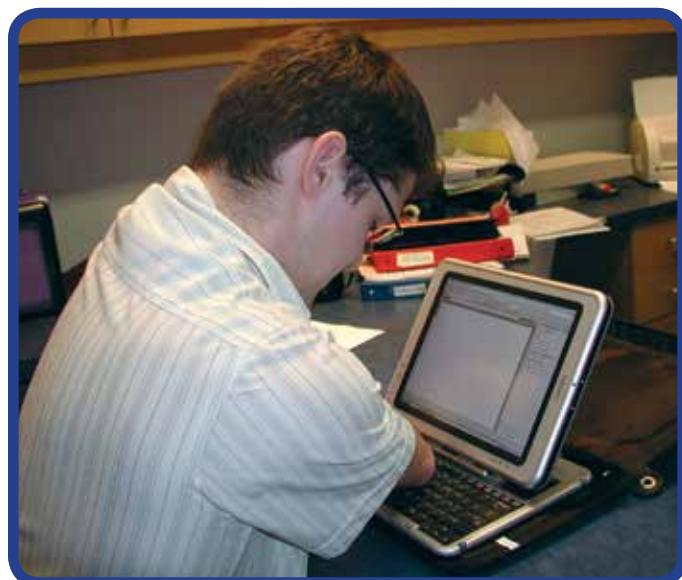
- A forearm computer cuff which has a prong attached can be used by multiple amputees to use a computer keyboard.
- A multiple amputee may require their desk or chair set-up to suit their needs.
- A filing cabinet with an open front so that filing cabinet doors do not have to be opened and closed.
- A workstation or office on the ground floor may be required to avoid using the stairs if an elevator is not available.
- Extra equipment, such as a portable laptop computer, may be useful for attending meetings where a multiple amputee will not have access to their workstation equipment.

To help determine whether job accommodations are needed and how to put them into effect, employers can do a number of things. They can analyze the basic

elements and essential functions of the job. Then, in consultation with the amputee, they can evaluate the worker's job abilities/limitations and the workplace to ensure there are no potential obstacles there. The key is that the employer and employee should work together to select and implement reasonable accommodations.

It is important when considering job accommodations to differentiate between things that are necessities and those that are luxuries. In some cases, individuals start out by supplying items of their own and waiting until they've been at the job for a couple of weeks – if possible – to determine what is really necessary.

When describing disabilities, a person will usually just name their disability without really explaining what their "functional" limitations are. For example, if a person with a leg amputation has a mobility problem meaning that they are unable to stand for long periods or climb many stairs, then the real functional limitation is not that the person has an amputation but rather that the person is unable to stand for long periods or climb stairs. Therefore, when assessing what your functional limitations are, you should make sure that they are accurate. Remember, however, that you only need to consider the functional limitations that affect the essential duties of the position. For example, if you have a limitation of standing for long periods, and you have an office job so standing is not an essential function of the job, that limitation does not need to be addressed.



CHAMP Graduate Chris has a small, light-weight tablet computer.

A good tip when considering job accommodations is to keep it simple. It is sometimes possible, with the agreement of your supervisor, to trade duties or restructure the job. Non-essential duties could be traded with another employee or non-essential job elements that you are unable to perform could be assigned to another employee in exchange for a task that you can perform instead.

Sometimes, depending on the disability, it might be valuable to modify a person's work schedule, such as offering part-time work, a flexible schedule, or time off as required for treatments or therapy. You should outline your requirements to your employer as the employer may envision frequent and lengthy appointments needed for medical reasons or for prosthetic fittings. Often, amputees require only occasional visits to their prosthetist to have adjustments made to their artificial limbs.

To reiterate – discussions with prospective employers about job accommodations are usually handled during the face-to-face interview. You will want to put the employer's mind at ease as they may be envisioning high costs and complicated equipment, which is usually not the case.

Part VI – Conclusion

Inspirational Success Stories!

Although there are some difficult situations you may encounter throughout your job search, we are pleased to say the majority of young amputees have had very positive experiences. We feel the best way to offer you encouragement is to share with you some of the successes of our young CHAMP graduates:

- John (right above elbow amputee) has a Law degree from the University of Ottawa. John has articled and is now a fully qualified lawyer.
- Paula (a left hand amputee) graduated from Carleton University with a BA (Honours) in English. Since graduating she has been working as a Communications Officer and Staff Writer for the University of Winnipeg.
- Catherine (photo above) (a left below elbow amputee) is a professional engineer working in the environmental field with Imperial Oil.
- Tom (a right hand amputee) has always dreamed to be a pilot and he worked hard to make his dream come true, learning to use his artificial hand with the cockpit controls!
- Jane (left below elbow amputee) has a Business degree in Commerce from the University of Ottawa and is currently employed by a bank in a management capacity.
- Tim (a bilateral Symes amputee) has a Social Work degree from Dalhousie University. Tim has been working for the Workers Compensation Board since 2001 dealing with claims and health care assessments.
- Leanne (a multiple amputee) graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Saskatchewan. She then was hired by the City of Saskatoon for an accounting job in the Treasurer's Department.
- Annae (a bilateral above elbow amputee) has a job with TransAlta in Calgary in their Energy Trading and Marketing Division.



Good luck with your job search!

Appendices

Bibliography

Astaire Witt, Melanie. *Job Strategies for People With Disabilities*. Peterson's Guide, 1992. Print.

Bissonnette, Denise. Crossroads: *Motivation and Self-Esteem for Employment Preparation and Job Retention*. Milt Wright & Associates, Inc., 1991. Print.

Emerging Workforce Catalogue. The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, 1996-97. Print.

"*Employment Equity Act.*" *Department of Justice*. Government of Canada, 14 Aug. 2012. Web. <laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts>.

Further Resources

Publications

Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate – Interpretation by Ontario Human Rights Commission of what is meant by accommodation of the needs of persons with disabilities. Aims to help persons with disability, persons responsible for accommodations, and the general public understand and apply the concepts of accommodation. More information available through the Ontario Human Rights Commission. ohrc.on.ca | 1 800 387-9080 | TTY: 1 800 308-5561

JAN (Job Accommodation Network) (US) – Consultants provide online information about job accommodations, including a searchable online accommodation resource. jan.wvu.edu | 1 800 526-7234 | TTY: 1 877 781-9403

Employment Resources for Disabled Individuals

National

Ability Edge – Internships for Graduates with Disabilities – Ability Edge is an internship program offered by Career Edge specifically designed for university, college and high school graduates with disabilities. Through their six-, nine- or 12-month paid internships, graduates with disabilities obtain meaningful work experience at a variety of Canadian organizations.

careeredge.ca | info@careeredge.ca | 1 888 507-EDGE (3343)

Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits (Service Canada) – This program offers much more than a disability pension, including work incentives for persons with disabilities. hrsdc.gc.ca | 1 800 277-9914 | TTY: 1 800 255-4786

Canadian Human Rights Commission – Information on employment and disabilities including accommodation and hiring guidelines.

chrc-ccdp.gc.ca | 1 888 214-1090 | 1 888 643-3304

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) – Intelligence Matters – Offers careers on the frontline of national security. CSIS values critical thinking and ethical practices and offers a challenging, highly professional environment. CSIS is an equal opportunity employer with a diverse and inclusive workforce. Possible positions include: Intelligence Officers, Engineers, Technologists, Analysts, Linguists, Information Specialists and Administrators.

intelligencematters.ca

E-Den – An email group that discusses disability and employment issues with a specific focus on issues in British Columbia.

orw.ca

Independent Living Canada – Promotes and enables the progressive process of persons with disabilities taking the responsibility for the development and management of personal and community resources. The Head Office is located in Ottawa.

cailc.ca | info@cailc.ca | 613 563-2581 | TTY: 613 563-4215

National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) – This association advocates for increased accessibility at all levels so that disabled students may gain equal access to college or university education.

neads.ca | info@neads.ca | 613 380-8065 | 1 877 670-1256

Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (Human Resources and Social Development Canada)

– Helps people with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and keep employment or become self-employed. If you are interested in applying for the program, you should contact your local Service Canada Center (SCC).

hrsdc.gc.ca | 1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232) | TTY: 1 800 962-9105

Toronto Public Library – Career Bookmarks (People with Disabilities) – People with disabilities face specific challenges during the job search process. The web pages listed in this guide will highlight some of the concerns and issues you may need to address.

careerbookmarks.tpl.toronto.on.ca | cbmail@tpl.toronto.on.ca

WORKink (Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work – CCRW) – Promotes and supports the employment of persons with disabilities, providing labour market and career information, access to national, provincial, and territorial resources.

workink.com | workink@ccrw.org

Regional and Local

*Note: Not all provincial programs are listed here.

Western Provinces

Champions Career Centre (Alberta) – As a partnership of agencies, employers and government, they are dedicated to increasing the participation of disabled individuals in the Alberta workforce.

championscareercentre.org | info@championscareercentre.org | 403 265-5374 | TTY: 403 265-5309

Chrysalis (Edmonton and Calgary) – Alberta society for citizens with disabilities; provides employment services, vocational training and support.
chrysalis.ab.ca | 780 454-9656 (Edmonton) | 403 258-1501 (Calgary)

Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program (EDP) (BC) – (BC, MB, SK, AB) – The EDP supports the federal government's ongoing commitment to help reduce barriers and increase self-employment opportunities for Western Canadian entrepreneurs with disabilities.
wd.gc.ca/eng/13643.asp | 1 888 338-9378 | TTY: 1 888 303-3388

LinkUp Employment Services (Winnipeg and Vancouver) – A charitable, not-for-profit employment services agency.

Winnipeg Office | linkup.ca | Winnipeg@linkup.ca | 204 956-5724
Vancouver Office | linkup.ca | Vancouver@linkup.ca | 604 602-1505

Neil Squire Foundation (Western Regional Office) – A national non-profit organization committed to providing education, technology and career development for people with physical disabilities. The Head Office is located in Burnaby.

neilsquire.ca | info@neilsquire.ca | 604 473-9363 | 1 877 673-9360

Reaching E-Quality Employment Services (Winnipeg) – This non-profit employment agency helps promote and facilitate the employment of people with physical disabilities.

re-es.org | info@re-es.org | 204 832-7337 | TTY: 204 947-3480

Step Services (Manitoba) – A program which creates career-related opportunities within the provincial government of Manitoba for students with disabilities.

studentjobs.gov.mb.ca | mgi@gov.mb.ca | 1 866 626-4862

The Saskatchewan Abilities Council (Saskatchewan) – We offer Rehabilitation Services to people of any age, with any type of disability, from any part of Saskatchewan. Areas include: rehabilitation and vocational rehabilitation services, recreational services and special needs transportation.

abilitiescouncil.sk.ca | provincialservices@abilitiescouncil.sk.ca | 306 374-4448

The Vocational and Rehabilitation Institute (Calgary) – A non-profit organization assisting people with disabilities to live with dignity and value as contributing members of the community and also features a special section on employment.

vecova.ca | info@vecova.ca | 403 284-1121

Western Economic Diversification (BC, AB, SK, MB) – A federal program that enables rural entrepreneurs with disabilities to pursue their business goals and contribute to the economic growth of their communities. Business services offered include: help to develop customized business plans, mentoring and counselling services, training and access to capital.

wd.gc.ca | info@wd-deo.gc.ca | 1 888 338-9378 | TTY: 1 877 303-3388

Central Provinces

Bender Consulting Service of Canada (BCSC) (Toronto) – A for-profit consulting firm specializing in creating employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, in the information technology, engineering, finance/accounting, and general business areas.

benderofcanada.com | info@benderofcanada.com | 647 287-6557

Durham Region Employment Network (Oshawa, ON) – This network has 70 organizations that help people find jobs and offers community support if needed.

dren.org | 905 720-1777 | Fax: 905 720-1363

Employment Access (Mississauga region, ON) – Offers one-stop access to employment services for persons with disabilities.

disabilityaccess.org | empacc@disabilityaccess.org | 1 866 969-9734 | TTY: 905 755-9958

LinkUp Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities (Greater Toronto Area) – A charitable, not-for-profit employment services agency.

linkup.ca | info@linkup.ca | 416 413-4922 | TTY: 416 413-4926

Neil Squire Foundation (Central Regional Office) – A national non-profit organization committed to providing education, technology and career development for people with physical disabilities.

neilsquire.ca | on.info@neilsquire.ca | 613 723-3575

Employment Ontario – Ontario's Employment and Training Network – Helps you get the training, education, skills and experience to achieve your goals.

edu.gov.on.ca | 1 800 387-5514 | TTY: 1 800 268-7095

The Ontario March of Dimes Employment Service – Works to improve the employment and income potential of disabled individuals through services in the areas of assessment, skills training and job placement.

marchofdimes.ca | info@marchofdimes.ca | 416 425-3463 | 1 800 263-3463

Atlantic Provinces

Opening Doors Program (Newfoundland and Labrador) – Provides services and programs with the goal of increasing the number of persons with disabilities in the provincial public service.

exec.gov.nl.ca/exec/pss | openingdoors@gov.nl.ca | 1 800 950-4414 | TTY: 709 729-5441

Neil Squire Foundation (Atlantic Regional Office) – A national non-profit organization committed to providing education, technology and career development for people with physical disabilities.

Fredericton Office | neilsquire.ca | nb.info@neilsquire.ca | 506 450-7999 | 1 866 446-7999

Let Abilities Work (New Glasgow, NS) – Assisted services available to unemployed residents working less than 20 hours a week and not in school. Enhanced services are available for persons with disabilities upon request.

careerconnections.ns.ca | information@careerconnections.ca | 902 752-6826

Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons' (New Brunswick) – Their website includes a directory of career counselling and job placement services.

gnb.ca/0048 | pcsdp@gnb.ca | 506 444-3000 | 1 800 442-4412

General Employment Resources (non-specific to disability)

Workopolis Campus – Summer jobs, part-time jobs, entry-level full time jobs, internship, or career – specifically for high school, college or university students.
campus.workopolis.com

Canadajobs.com – Links to government and commercial job postings and resources.
canadajobs.com

CareerEdge – Offers six-, nine- or 12-month paid internships for university, college and high school graduates in a variety of fields, including marketing, human resources, information technology and finance.
careeredge.ca | info@careeredge.ca | 1 888 507-EDGE (3343)

Charity Village Career Centre – This site posts many job openings in the non-profit sector, with some listings linking back to the employer's website for more information on the organization.
charityvillage.com

CultureWorks – A searchable employment database for those interested in working in the Canadian cultural industry, (e.g., artists and producers). Registration is free, and allows job seekers to browse postings and access other employment services.
cultureworks.ca

Electronic Labour Exchange – A system based on specific skill sets, used to match work to people and people to work.
eluta.ca

Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) – The primary program through which the Federal Government Departments and Agencies recruit full-time post-secondary students for temporary employment.
jobs.gc.ca

Government of Canada – Youth Path – Provides funding to establish programs and services intended to give youth greater access to job opportunities and work experience, including internships.
youth.gc.ca | 1 800 935-5555

Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) – “HRSDC is responsible for providing all Canadians with the tools they need to thrive and prosper in the workplace and community. We support human capital development, labour market development and are dedicated to establishing a culture of lifelong learning for Canadians.” This site offers information on many aspects of employment in Canada, including job search engines and services for employers and entrepreneurs.
hrsdc.gc.ca

Jobs in the Federal Public Service – Includes most federal job postings.
jobs.gc.ca

Job Shark – A searchable database of Canadian jobs; job seekers enter a profile of their skills and qualifications, as well as their chosen job field. The database then searches for employment opportunities which meet the chosen criteria and emails the job seeker directly.
jobshark.com

Training, Career, and Worker Information (Service Canada) – Find the information you need to get a job and achieve career goals from an online source.
jobsetc.ca

WorkInfonet – The primary source of career, education, and labour market information in Canada.
workinfonet.ca

Young Professionals International (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada) – Provides youth in Canada an opportunity to gain experience abroad.
international.gc.ca | 1 800 267-8376 | Fax: 204 831-8467

Youth Opportunities Ontario – A service of the Government of Ontario which provides programs to help Ontario youth gain the skills and information they need to thrive in the workforce through apprenticeship, internship, job and career exploration, and experience. Samples of the services offered are:

- Ontario Summer Jobs – student summer jobs and self employment.
- Ontario Internship Program – gain experience in the Ontario public service.
- Apprenticeship – train to become a skilled worker.
- Summer Company – get help starting your own business.
- Job Connect – career and employment preparation services.
- Job Market – a quick reference for career planning.

youthjobs.gov.on.ca

Notes

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The War Amps

info@waramps.ca | waramps.ca