Persons with Disabilities: Technology, Education & Employment

December 3rd is the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons. The theme of this year's celebration, **E-Accessibility**, recognizes the importance of technology in the lives of persons with disabilities, as well as the need to improve access to information technology for persons with disabilities. To highlight the importance of this day, as well as its chosen theme, the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) is releasing a series of four themed fact sheets in the lead-up to this day.

As an individual who was facing the effects
of progressive vision loss, and who went back to college in his mid-thirties - it was technology that opened my eyes to a new world and a new career.

~ Kelly Nadeau

CAILC Board Member

Fact:

❖ It has been said that **work is one of the key reasons people use the internet**. [1]
❖ **Information and communication technology skills** (ICT), which include internet skills, are **becoming increasingly important to employers**. [1]
❖ Persons with **lower levels of education are less likely to have formal training using the internet**. [1]
❖ Although more and more companies are using online recruitment to find employees, **research suggests job sites remain largely inaccessible** to persons with disabilities. [1]
❖ In the UK, **1.3 million working age persons with disabilities face exclusion because companies use inaccessible online recruitment sites**. [1]
❖ **4 out of 5** (or **81%**) of **US job sites have been found to be inaccessible**. [1]
❖ Although it has been noted that **careers in high-tech can be particularly accessible** to persons with disabilities, **most of these careers require a bachelor's degree or higher**. [2]
❖ In Canada, **working age adults with disabilities** are **less likely to have completed high school and/ or completed a post-secondary education program**. [3]
❖ Only **44%** of working age **adults with disabilities are employed** compared to **78% of their non-disabled peers**. [3]
❖ For **persons with disabilities in Canada**, there is evidence that suggests **having a home computer makes one more likely to be working at a paid job**. [4]
❖ **Funding** has been reported as the **top barrier** by service providers and policy experts to **realizing the full potential of using technology to prepare young people with disabilities for the workforce**. [2]

[1] Disability and the Digital Divide: An Employers' Forum on Disability Briefing for SCR Practitioners. Available online
[2] (2002) Burgstahler, S. The Role of Technology in Preparing Youth with Disabilities For Postsecondary Education and Employment. Unpublished Manuscript.
[3] (2004) Government of Canada. Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.
[4] (2002) Canadian Council on Social Development Disability Fact Sheet No.6.

Solutions:

✓ **Building recruitment sites which are barrier-free costs no more** than building inaccessible sites. [1]
✓ **Making existing web sites accessible** costs on average **under 5 %** of the total cost of the site. [1]
✓ **CAILC** and **Independent Living Resource Centres** (**ILRCs**) across Canada can help **individuals**, **governments**, and **businesses'** to **ensure the technologies** they use **are enabling**.
✓ Locally, **ILRCs** can help **persons with disabilities identify and access technology** and **related training** and **employment opportunities**.

[1] Disability and the Digital Divide: An Employers' Forum on Disability Briefing for SCR Practitioners. Available online.