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Charitable Business No. 10807 5003 RR0001 No. d'entreprise charitable

10 November 2020

For immediate release

INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CRUCIAL TO SUCCESS OF ACCESSIBILITY TECHNOLOGIES

Ottawa (ON) – Including people with disabilities in the research, development, and marketing of accessibility technologies can be the difference between the failure and success of those technologies, according to a new study by the Canadian Association of the Deaf – Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC).

“Unfortunately, this kind of involvement doesn’t happen often,” laments Jim Roots, executive director of CAD-ASC. “Usually, what happens is that people who don’t have disabilities will create devices and technologies that they think will be useful for us. They are often wrong, because they haven’t bothered to ask us what we want.”

The consequence is that years of work and money can be wasted creating technologies that people with disabilities don’t want, can’t afford, or won’t use.

CAD-ASC hired two research groups to undertake the study: David Berman Communications Inc., a leading international accessible design team based in Ottawa, and the Deaf Wireless Canada Consultative Committee, a national body dedicated to equality in wireless accessibility and affordability for Canadians who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and hard of hearing.

The project was funded in part by the Office of Consumer Affairs in the Ministry of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada. The project’s goal was to strengthen marketplace attention to Canadians with communication disabilities and remove barriers to their participation in that marketplace.

“When designed properly, with the full involvement of people with disabilities, new technology can benefit us in the same way it benefits the general population,” added Roots. “The current pandemic has opened everybody’s eyes to the terrific accessibility provided by video-conferencing.

“For years, Deaf people have been using video calls as our version of phoning because these calls allow us to communicate through sign language. Now everybody realizes video-conferences are the great equalizer in phone technology: add a qualified sign language interpreter on video remote, take two minutes to explain how it works, and then we’re all on a level playing-field.”

The Canadian Association of the Deaf – Association des Sourds du Canada is the national information, research, and community action organization of Deaf Canadians. Its mandate is to protect and promote the rights, needs, and concerns of Deaf people in Canada. Founded in 1940, it is the oldest national-level disabled consumer organization in the country.

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For more information, contact Jim Roots, Executive Director, via email at jroots@cad.ca, or visit www.cad.ca .