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Independent Living Canada Survey Finds Canadians With Disabilities Have Major Concerns About COVID-19

For immediate release.

Ottawa, Ontario: Independent Living Canada (ILC) releases initial findings from a survey completed on May 5, 2020. This survey focused on people with disabilities, staff and volunteers within the 24 Independent Living Centres across Canada. Questions were designed to gauge the concerns about COVID-19.

Of the 325 respondents close to fifty per cent were people with disabilities. Overall, grave concerns were expressed about various aspects concerning COVID-19 issues. People with disabilities were more likely, and, by more than double to their workers or volunteers, to be concerned about health threats or social isolation poised by COVID-19. Over ninety-one percent of respondents were “Concerned” about being infected by the Coronavirus with sixty percent of this group stating they were “Very concerned.”

Two thirds of persons with disabilities were “Concerned” about:

- Not being able to get regular food and grocery supplies, like before.
- Not being enough money during the pandemic to buy food or pay rent.

One respondent stated, “...according to the government we don’t exist in their eyes only give it to people you want to give it to is not fair. I’m on a low income just barely making it so where is the help?”

Another added, “There’s help for everyone except us. People with disabilities matter too! Food is so expensive now that I have to choose to pay rent or buy food. Government should help us that have disabilities that can’t afford to live.”

Within the 80 percentiles of those who expressed “Concern”, over two thirds of people with disabilities were “Very Concerned” about:

- Not having access to Personal Protective Equipment.
- Not having the right or ability to be immediately tested for having COVID-19.
- Not receiving the same level of medical treatment if they were to be hospitalized for COVID-19.
- Not being consulted like others about being treated for COVID-19.
- Being more socially isolated than ever before.
- Thinking that if a choice were to be made as to who lives or dies because of COVID-19, “I, as a person with a disability, will be chosen to die”.

Eighty-one percent of respondents were concerned about not being able to visit a doctor or obtain a normal supply of prescription drugs. “Going to the pharmacy multiple times because the required number of medications has been reduced to one-month supply instead of 90-day supply resulting in additional co-pay costs and increased trips per month to the pharmacy.”

Patrick Curran, National Executive Director, IL Canada, noted, “While these survey findings are preliminary, the need for all levels of government to pay attention to the concerns of Canadians living with a disability during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic is very clear.”

Independent Living Canada is preparing a secondary survey involving a broader outreach and will be releasing a full summary of its findings.

Independent Living Canada works in partnership with 24 Independent Living Centres across Canada designed to facilitate greater independence through the program involvement of persons living with any form of disability. The work IL Canada and Centres perform ensures the inclusion of our cross-disability community from coast to coast.

For more information, contact Patrick Curran, National Executive Director. (613-563-2581 / patrickcurran@ilc-vac.ca)