

For immediate release

The end of Public Access to the Internet?

Ottawa, November 19th, 2007 –Despite the obvious needs and demonstrated success of Internet community access programs, there has been no announcement concerning their future funding or renewal. All requests sent to the Honorable Minister Jim Prentice of Industry Canada, ministry responsible for this program, have gone unanswered. Without any renewal budget, these programs will end March 31st.

The Community Access Program (CAP) ensures the maintenance of computer equipment and the training of employees and volunteers in the non-profit sector. The CAP's Youth Initiative (CAP-YI) provides employment opportunities for countless young men and women while also offering affordable Internet access to thousands of Canadians. Training sessions are given by young facilitators in schools, libraries, community centers to promote the development of basic skills in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), enabling many people to become active members of society in the Information Age. The PAC also offers special training programs to people with disabilities and people with literacy issues to take into account their special needs.

The Community Access Program provides access to those people who might not have computers or Internet access in their homes or workplaces. These people are mostly senior citizens, First Nations, immigrants, the unemployed, people facing literacy challenges, the homeless, people with disabilities, people living with mental health issues, in short, a large segment of the population facing exclusion in part because of new technologies.

For many people, public access and computer training have become essential services. Whether we want to look for a job, access government on-line services, communicate with distant friends and family, learn new skills, break free from isolation, facilitate communication for people with reduced mobility, etc. More and more aspects of our lives demand that we have access to computers and the knowledge to use them. In the last 5 years, there has been a steady increase in the use of community access centers. This year, for 40% of users, it was their first experience with ICTs.

To this end, Telecommunities Canada wishes to remind Industry Canada and the Canadian Government of the importance of the

Community Access Program and its Youth Initiative. These two programs have proven their worth and their continued success warrants stable and sufficient funding.

About Telecommunities Canada

To ensure that all Canadians are able to participate in community-based communications and electronic information services Telecommunities Canada promotes and supports local community network initiatives. Therefore, Telecommunities represents and promotes the Canadian community networking movement on the national and international level.

The Community Access Program (CAP) Youth Initiative (YI) is coordinated by Industry Canada's Community Access Program and is funded through Human Resources and Social Development Canada's [Youth Employment Strategy \(YES\)](#).

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