

**Persons with Disabilities
Obtaining Long-term
Attachment to the Workforce:
Barriers, Challenges and
Opportunities**





EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES.

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February, 2002



Overview of Presentation

- Current Status
- Barriers, Challenges and Issues
- Economic Benefit
- Assistive Technology
- Conclusions and Opportunities



Current Status

- In 1991 (HALS), 16 % of Canadians had a disability (4.2 million people).
- 56% of persons with disabilities were of working age (16 - 64)



Current Status *cont.*

- In 1995 (1996 census) only 43% of persons with disabilities were participating in the labour market (about half the percentage of people without disabilities).
- Only 14% of women with disabilities worked full time, for the full year.
- 62% of women with disabilities did not work at any point in the year.



Current Status *cont.*

- More than 50% of men with disabilities were without paid work for the whole year, compared to less than 10% for men without disabilities.
- The unemployment rate for people with disabilities was almost double that of people without disabilities.



Current Status *cont.*

- People with Disabilities in the Private Sector:
 - Their representation increased only marginally from 2.3% in 1998 to 2.4% in 1999
 - They received only 0.9% of all hires, their lowest share since 1988. Only 700 obtained employment where close to 5,000 should have been hired



Current Status *cont.*

- People with Disabilities in the Public Sector:
 - Their representation increased only marginally from 4.6% in 1998 to 4.7% as of March 2000
 - They continued to be denied their fair share of hiring opportunities in the public sector. Only 312 obtained employment, where close to 900 should have been hired
 - Not a single person with a disability was appointed to the Executive Group



Barriers, Challenges and Issues Related to Labour Market Programming for Persons with Disabilities



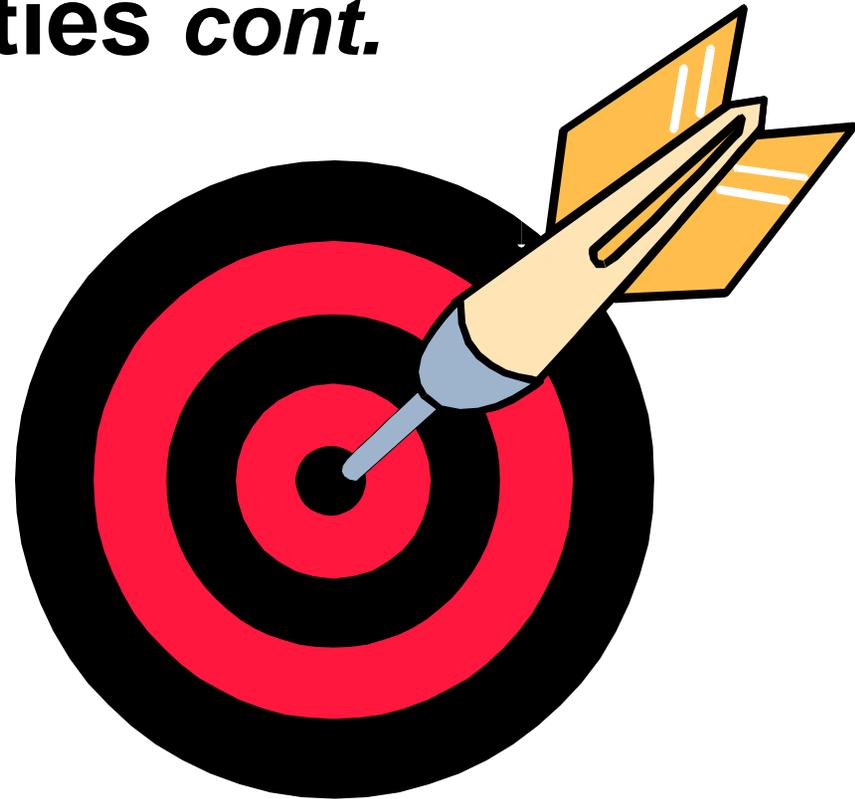
Marginalisation of People with Disabilities

- Great majority of persons with disabilities are very marginalised.
- Most have been experiencing marginalisation for many years (for some, a life time).



Marginalisation of People with Disabilities *cont.*

- Need targeted, long-term individualised and holistic programming.
- Based on a consumer-centred model.



Marginalisation of People with Disabilities *cont.*

- Although more recognition of this recently, virtually all existing programming for people with disabilities is aimed at those most ready to return to the workforce.



Marginalisation of People with Disabilities *cont.*

- Long-term commitment and investment by all sectors of society.
- Society must really want change.



Economic Disincentive

- Major problem for many people with disabilities attempting to return to work.
- Need to maintain disability supports and benefits after return to work.
- Rapid re-instatement if one should lose their paid employment.



Economic Disincentive *cont.*

- Simple economic analysis can show that policies that perpetuate economic disincentives should be eliminated.



Disability Supports and Benefits

- Includes:
 - transportation
 - attendant services
 - interpreter services
 - technical aids (wheelchairs, computer access technology, Braille readers)
 - prescription drugs

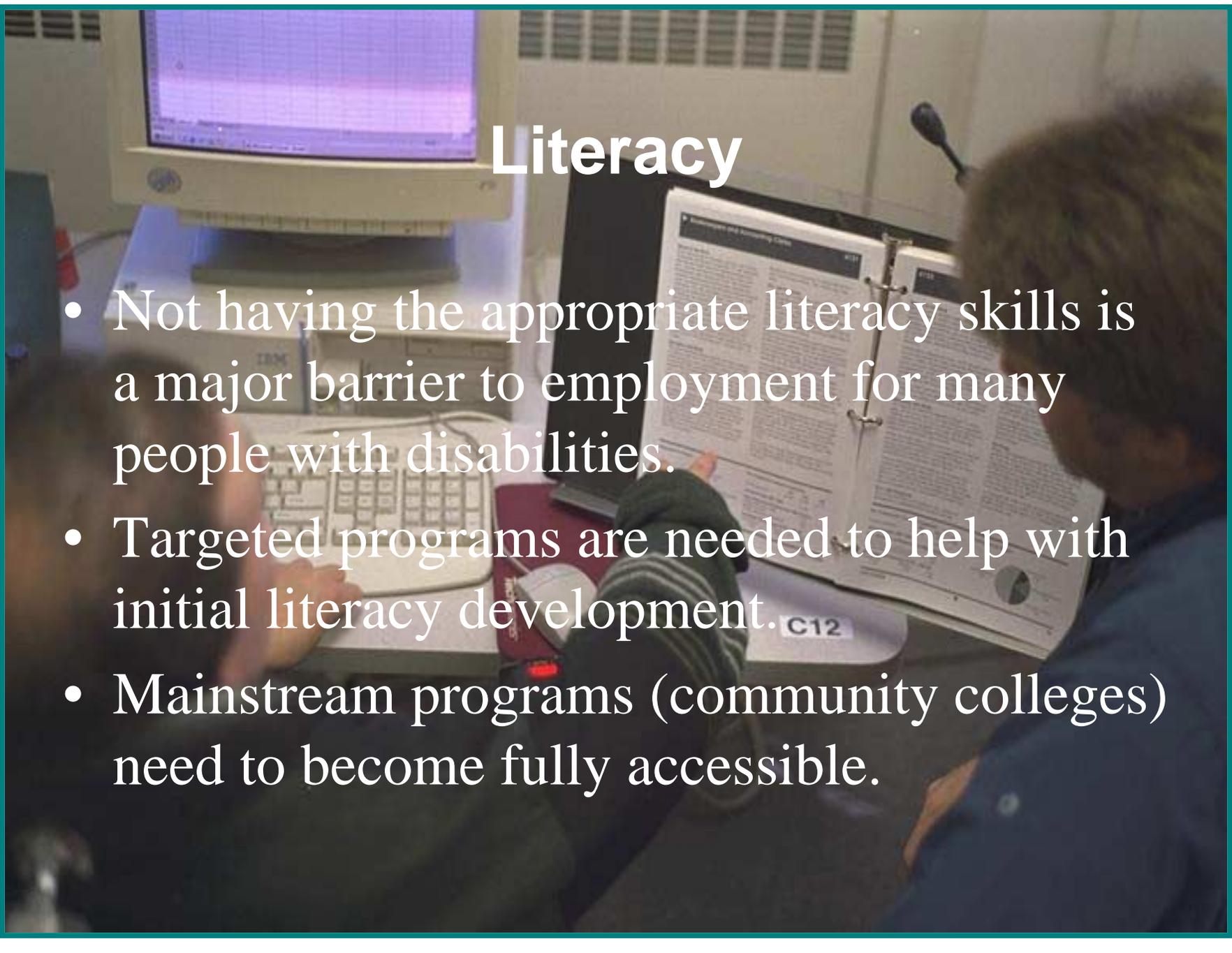


Disability Supports and Benefits

cont.

- Need disability supports in place before significant improvement in employment rates for people with disabilities will be realised.
- Policies must be developed and resources allocated to address this issue.





Literacy

- Not having the appropriate literacy skills is a major barrier to employment for many people with disabilities.
- Targeted programs are needed to help with initial literacy development.
- Mainstream programs (community colleges) need to become fully accessible.

Education and Skills

- A clear correlation between level of education and employment for people with disabilities has been established.
- Need policies and programs that provide easy access to education and skill development.





Education and Skills *cont.*

- For those more marginalised, this requires targeted programs that can build confidence and facilitate transition to mainstream.

A photograph of a person's hand using a computer mouse on a desk. The desk also has a keyboard and a spiral notebook. The text is overlaid on the image.

Work Place Accessibility

- Many work places are still not physically accessible.
- Policies and programs need to be in place to encourage/ensure employers have accessible work places.
- Modifications need to be made in a timely manner or opportunities can be lost.

Develop Employers

- Education: they need to better understand their critical role, including the need to make an investment in individuals with disabilities.
- Awareness training of existing employees.



Develop Employers *cont.*

- Need policies and programs that will:
 - develop new employers and employment opportunities
 - provide long-term support for employers and their employees with disabilities



Economic Benefit



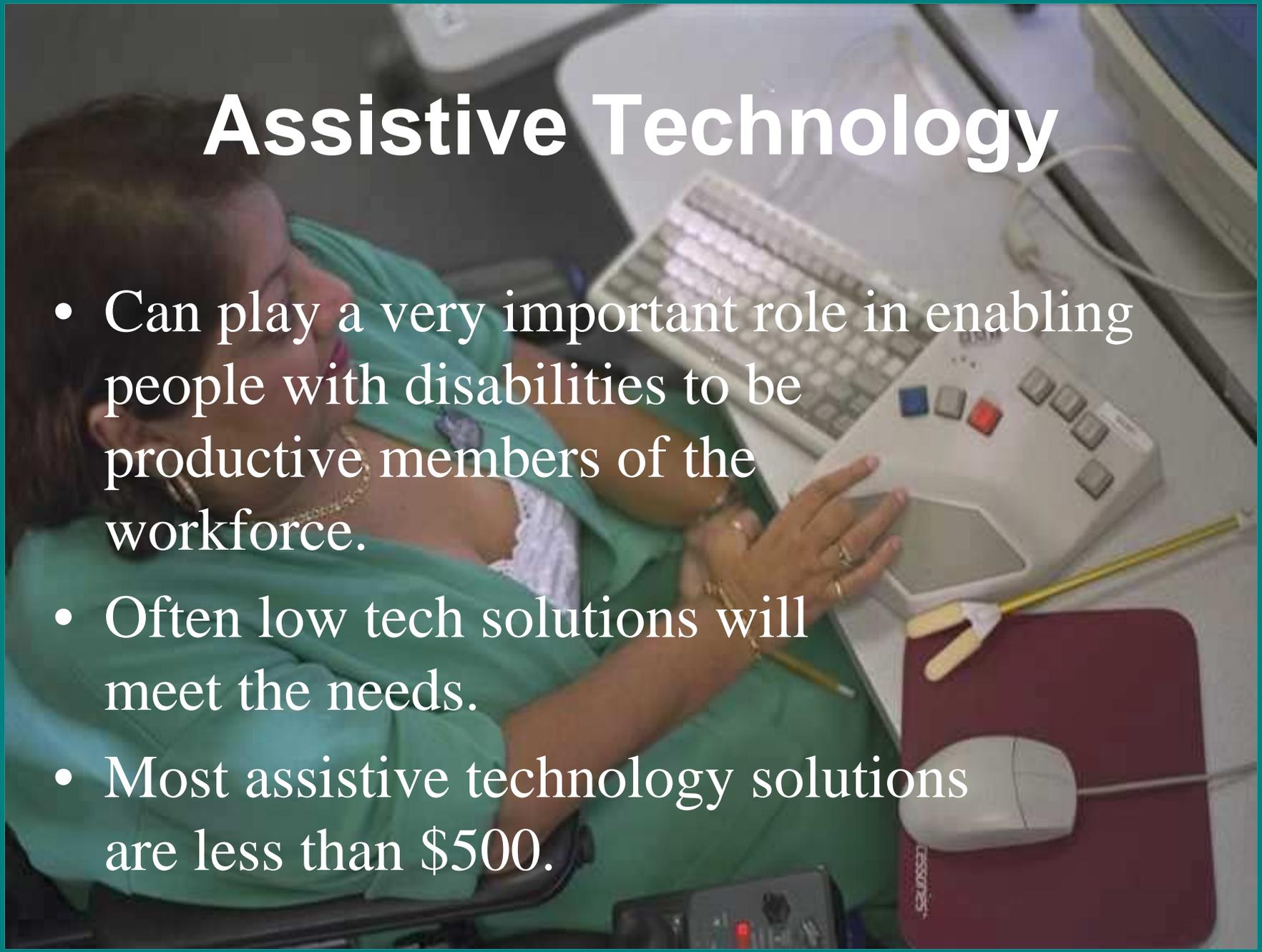
- There is a significant economic benefit to pursuing pro-active policies and programs that facilitate long-term employment of people with disabilities.

Economic Benefit *cont.*

- Example from the Neil Squire Foundation's employment preparation program
 - shows at least a 5:1 payback ratio
 - based on taxes earned and social assistance saved
 - does not include many indirect benefits



Assistive Technology

A woman with dark hair, wearing a green top and a necklace, is seated at a desk. She is looking towards the right side of the frame. On the desk in front of her is a white computer keyboard, a white mouse on a red mousepad, and a specialized white device with several buttons (blue, red, grey) and a trackball. A yellow pencil is also visible on the desk. The background shows a computer monitor and other office equipment.

- Can play a very important role in enabling people with disabilities to be productive members of the workforce.
- Often low tech solutions will meet the needs.
- Most assistive technology solutions are less than \$500.

Assistive Technology *cont.*

- People with disabilities need access to this technology.
- R&D into new and innovative assistive technology is needed to further open opportunities, especially for those with more significant disabilities.



Assistive Technology *cont.*

- Jouse™ video A good example of technology opening up opportunities.



Conclusions and Opportunities

- Need policies and programs that provide long-term, targeted support.
- LMDAs need to ensure that their mainstream programs are fully accessible to people with disabilities.



Conclusions and Opportunities *cont.*

- Ensure easy access to education and skill development.
- Eliminate economic disincentives.
- We need the involvement and investment of employers



Conclusions and Opportunities *cont.*

- Significant economic benefits will be achieved.
- Assistive Technology plays an important role in facilitating employment opportunities



Conclusions and Opportunities *cont.*

- Need a comprehensive pan-Canadian labour market strategy that integrates the efforts of LMDA, EAPD (Employment Assistance for People with Disabilities) and OF (Opportunities Fund) along with additional resources to fill in any gaps not covered by this integration



Thank you for this opportunity.

