



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Ottawa, June 6, 2022** – In celebration of Independent Living Day in Canada, Independent Living (IL) Canada and ARCH Disability Law Centre are pleased to release a Report with findings from a survey on disability-related barriers to COVID-19 vaccines, titled: *Disability Related Barriers to COVID-19 Vaccines: Highlights from the COVID-19 Vaccination Accessibility Survey 2021*.

The key tenets of the Independent Living movement in Canada are consumer control, the dignity of risk, peer support and empowerment. Consumer control means that people with disabilities are in control of their lives. To be an Independent Living Centre, 51 percent of board members and staff must be persons with disabilities. Dignity of risk, means, being able to take risks, fail, learn from our mistakes, and move on. By having access to information and peer support, people with disabilities are empowered to make their own decisions.

During this pandemic, people with disabilities in Canada have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. In many cases, people with disabilities lost consumer control, as decisions were taken out of their hands, and they lacked access to important information and became disempowered throughout this pandemic.

“We undertook this survey to listen to the voices of people with disabilities and to learn what their experiences were in accessing vaccines across the country”, said Anne MacRae, Executive Director of Independent Living Canada. “We learned that while some were able to access vaccines with minimal difficulty, many did experience barriers”. These barriers included inaccessible information, inaccessible transportation, inaccessible booking systems and vaccination sites, increased financial burden, and lack of information about how COVID-19 impacted specific disabilities.

“We hope the recommendations contained in this report will help governments and stakeholders to eliminate ongoing barriers, so that as COVID-19 continues and as we prepare for future pandemics, people with disabilities will not be forgotten again”, said Robert Lattanzio, Executive Director of ARCH Disability Law Centre.

### **About Independent Living (IL) Canada**

Founded in 1986, Independent Living Canada is a national non-profit association of Independent Living Centres led by and for people with disabilities who promote the Independent Living Philosophy. IL Canada supports the development of Independent

Living Centres, and provides education and leadership for its member organizations, partners and communities.

**About ARCH Disability Law Centre:**

ARCH Disability Law Centre is a disability rights specialty legal clinic in Ontario, and has been a leader in disability rights advocacy and test case litigation for almost 45 years. ARCH is dedicated to defending and advancing the equality rights, entitlements, fundamental freedoms, and inclusion of persons with disabilities with low income. ARCH is primarily funded by Legal Aid Ontario.

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