

# Barrier Free Saskatchewan

**MEDIA RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

**Monday, November 30, 2020**

**Jodhan2020 - 10th Anniversary**

**BLIND CANADIANS APPLAUD DECISION IN LANDMARK WEBSITE ACCESS CASE**

**Monday, November 29, 2010**

"Back in 2010 Blind persons all across Canada joined in celebrating the landmark decision in Donna Jodhan's victory in her Charter of Rights case against the federal government for its failure to provide 'equal access to, and benefit from, government information and services provided online to the public,'" says Robin East, Past-President of the nationwide Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians.

This Charter challenge was all about access to information and usability of federal information and websites.

"It is very regrettable that rights holders of Canada were forced to go to court and fight to gain access to information. This should not have been an issue in 2010 or some 10 years later," added East. "Blind, partially sighted, and deaf-blind Canadians must not be closed off from accessing Government information forms and applications."

"I launched this case for all blind Canadians and for the kids of the future," says a jubilant Donna Jodhan upon hearing of the successful outcome of her case back in 2010.

"Blind Canadians want to be able to access information on websites independently and privately."

"Today an increasing number of job applications and purchases are carried out electronically, and we must not be left on the sidelines," said Jodhan.

"We had hoped that this decision would have sent a signal to all website designers and developers working with organizations that the time has come for inclusive accessible websites." said Leo

Bissonnette, "It is time that governments be proactive and remove barriers to our equal participation in society instead of being reactive and fighting with citizens like Jodhan." added Bissonnette.

"Jodhan's charter challenge continued the efforts to give us a barrier free society where we have equal access to information at a time when online access is becoming increasingly important."

**For interviews, please contact:**

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## **BACKGROUND**

It's fair to say that Canadian citizen Donna Jodhan knows a lot about accessibility. A specialist consultant in the field with more than 26 years' experience, her company has worked with numerous clients, including financial institutions, and the University of Toronto. She has obtained Systems Engineering Certification from Microsoft and won various technical awards from IBM. She is a recipient of the Apple Certified Support Professional certification.

Jodhan's problems began in 2006, when she was unable to create a job profile on the Government of Canada's employment website - the point of access for all federal government job opportunities. When trying to complete a section of the form (the 'date available' field) she simply received an error message each time. She attempted to contact the site's owners, but the phone number provided was out of service.

Jodhan was forced to seek assistance from a sighted government employee to create a job profile, but was still unable to review any of the information entered, as she was not given any user identification or password.

In addition to the problems with job applications, she was also unable to complete a 2006 online Census form from Statistics Canada. The form was only fully accessible to those users who are blind or have significant vision loss, and who used the most recent version of the JAWS screen-reader - an expensive piece of technology, costing around \$1,000 Canadian at the time. Jodhan was again forced to rely on sighted assistance from a government employee to complete the Census, which she regarded as an invasion of her privacy.

Furthermore, Jodhan found she was unable to access information on Canada's national consumer price index and unemployment rate, again on Statistics Canada's website, as the information was only available in a PDF file, which had not been adapted for screen-readers. Jodhan was informed by government employees that no alternative formats were available.

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