

INDEPENDENCE 92

Canada has produced its share of heroes. Soldiers and diplomats, athletes and musicians — all have captured the imagination. Two of Canada's greatest heroes, however, spring from a group normally not thought of in that context: people with disabilities. Gallant Terry Fox won the heart of a nation with his one-legged marathon of hope across Canada, raising money to combat the cancer that would soon claim his life. Rick Hansen proved forever the potential that exists in the disabled by his two-year wheelchair trek around the world, covering 34 countries and 40 000 km.

In April 1992, Canada will build on this legacy by hosting Independence 92 — an international congress and exposition on disability. From April 22 to 25, more than 7000 people will gather in Vancouver, British Columbia, at the spectacular Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre with its unique cruise-ship design and soaring five-sail roof. It will be the largest event of its kind ever held in North America, bringing together people with disabilities, policy makers, educators, employers and representatives from service industries. The occasion will also provide an appropriate conclusion to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

Rick Hansen, chairperson of Independence 92, is articulate in describing its goals: "We would like to influence and create positive changes to ensure persons with disabilities have the opportunity to fully participate in community life. We also envision an opportunity to share experiences, knowledge, ideas and technology

in support of an independent lifestyle for persons with disabilities."

The B.C. Pavilion Corporation, a provincial Crown corporation, is undertaking this ambitious project with the full

in the area of disability, who will hear and discuss more than 200 papers focused on the theme of "Self-Determination by People with Disabilities." They will explore such important topics as how those with disabilities can influence social

ground transportation. The exposition area itself will include wide aisles to accommodate wheelchairs, coded carpeting and signs in large print and braille to aid the visually impaired, and guides to accompany delegates.



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participation of disabled people both in Canada and abroad. To date, an International Advisory Committee includes members from Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Europe and the United States. It will represent a broad cross-section of disabled groups, ensuring that issues relevant to various types of disability will receive attention. The concerns of senior citizens will be included in all areas of the event, as aging populations will likely experience an increase in visual, hearing and mobility impairments.

The congress will consist of about 2700 delegates from up to 80 countries, including some of the world's foremost authorities

policy development, how they can maintain independence both economically and in their daily lives, and how they can actively contribute to their communities as full and equal citizens.

Covering 6500 m² with 277 booths, the exposition will be a marketplace for products geared to improving the lives of those with disabilities. The centre aisles, named Independence Street, will showcase models that integrate the disabled into mainstream society.

These models include a barrier-free home, a fully accessible workplace and classroom, retail shops and

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Canada is proud to host such a significant gathering, celebrating a new era of independent living for disabled members of the community. More and more, society recognizes that all its members have the right to be active participants and to realize their full potential. The spirit of Terry Fox and Rick Hansen continues to inspire. 🍁