

## **Certiport and Canadian Charity Association Partner to Allow Marginalized Residents to Bridge Canada's Digital Divide**

*National Initiative Launches to Obtain a Census of Digital Skills and Provide a Globally Recognized Credential to Canadians*

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**TORONTO – January 17, 2006**

Certiport and The Canadian Charity Association (CCA) today launched a nationwide partnership initiative designed to allow marginalized residents to assess and upgrade their computing skills. The program will also initiate a Census of Digital Skills™.

Effective today, five Community Computer Centres administered by the CCA will offer Certiport Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC<sup>3</sup>®), a globally recognized standard for digital literacy. Within one year, the plan calls for IC<sup>3</sup> certification to be offered through 50 Community Computer Centres across Canada.

"A statistical report published in 2004 indicated the number of poverty-stricken neighbourhoods in Toronto quadrupled during the past 20 years,"\* said David Saedi, president and CEO of Certiport. "Certiport's partnership with CCA aims to stem this trend by providing Canada's economically at-risk citizens with the opportunity to gain the skills and confidence they need to participate effectively in the new global community."

The CCA began in 2000 as an organization designed to alleviate hunger in Toronto. In 2002, the association enlarged its mission to provide critical employment skills to all Canadians. Carole French, executive director of the CCA, said the association's Community Computer Learning Centre programs have helped more than 66,000 Canadians address the growing digital divide and break the cycle of poverty.

"We chose Certiport because their programs add credibility to our outreach efforts," French said. "By offering people training services and validation of their skill sets, we will give them a global currency to acquire employment and the courage to re-integrate into society."

Beverly Keating MacIntyre, Certiport chief learning officer and a native Nova Scotian, will assist French in implementing the program and ensuring the partnership's outcomes are achieved. MacIntyre said she believes a wonderful transformation will occur as individuals begin to achieve success in the IC<sup>3</sup> program.

"The Community Computer Centres are equipped with the tools to do more than teach computer skills," MacIntyre said. "The CCA program meets the individuals in their home community, and the program directors understand the many challenges faced by the clients. Because the Canadian Charity Association offers a holistic approach to clients, visitors will obtain help with daily concerns, as well as digital literacy training. Consequently, the individuals will recognize that CCA is offering one-stop access for a wide range of services."

Another goal of the partnership is compilation of the first Census of Digital Skills in Canada. French said the time has come to assess Canada's digital literacy and find out where it stands relative to other nations around the globe.

"We might think we know where we are as a nation, but we have no statistical data to confirm or reject our assumptions," French said. "Our program will allow us to see where we need to focus our efforts, so we can improve our educational system and counteract the effects of the digital divide."

### **About The Canadian Charity Association**

The Canadian Charity Association (CCA) provides a holistic approach to servicing the needs of community members regardless of race, creed, location or culture. After developing a successful blueprint in Canada, CCA is in negotiations to replicate its program model in other countries.

### **About Certiport**

Certiport provides industry-leading training, assessment and certification solutions that enable individuals to develop the skills necessary to achieve more, distinguish themselves and advance in today's academic and business environments. These solutions include the Certiport Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC<sup>3</sup>®), the Microsoft Office Specialist Certification Program and Microsoft IT Academy delivered through a channel of more than 9,000 Certiport Centers worldwide. For more information about Certiport, visit [www.certiport.com](http://www.certiport.com).

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*\* The United Way reported the number of poor neighbourhoods in Toronto jumped from 30 in 1981 to 120 in 2001. The report can be viewed at [www.unitedwaytoronto.com/who we help/social issues uw reports.html](http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/who_we_help/social_issues_uw_reports.html)*

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