



November 27, 2014

Dear Steering Committee, Barrier-Free Canada

RE: CHS Letter of Support: Canadians with Disabilities Act

On the behalf of the Canadian Hearing Society, I am pleased to write this letter endorsing the growing demand for a Canadians with Disabilities Act.

Many people, organizations and governments across Canada believe in including people with disabilities in all parts of life. They are working together to make access and inclusion a reality. They want to end poverty, pull down barriers and help people with disabilities get the supports they need to participate fully in Canadian life.

Canada needs a strong, enforceable and effective Canadians with Disabilities Act that includes a barrier removal process, private sector and labour market strategy, (i.e. post-secondary education, training and employment) as well as an amendment to the Official Languages Act to include both American Sign Language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), and communication supports such as real time captioners and sign language interpreters.

The Federal Court of Canada's Canadian Association of the Deaf decision, August 2006, has significant implications for ensuring access for deaf, deafened, deaf-blind and hard of hearing Canadians to the federal government. "As Canadians, deaf persons are entitled to be full participants in the democratic process and functioning of government," states the Honourable Mr. Justice Mosley in his written judgment. "It is fundamental to an inclusive society that those with disabilities be accommodated when interacting with the institutions of government. The nature of the interests affected is central to the dignity of deaf persons. If they cannot participate in government surveys or interact with government officials they are not able to fully participate in Canadian life."

Canada and 151 other Member States and the European Community signed and ratified the landmark new Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations. The treaty aims to eradicate discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life including employment, education, health services, transportation and access to justice.

Furthermore, *Andy Scott's Task Force on Disability Report: Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act, October, 1996*, indicated that the Government of Canada should provide tangible evidence of leadership by introducing a Canadians with Disabilities act that ensures consistent action, coordination and accountability at the federal level.

To meet this goal, the Canadian Hearing Society supports a plan developed by Barrier-Free Canada to make certain full access and inclusion really happens. We ask this federal government to introduce, and pass, a strong enforceable and effective Canadians with Disabilities Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephanus Greeff', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Stephanus Greeff
Interim President and CEO

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