THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY
LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE L'OUÏE

April 30, 2003

Information Breaks Down Barriers:
CHS Celebrates Hearing Awareness Month

May is Hearing Awareness Month and The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) has chosen the theme "Help Break Down Barriers" to mark a month-long series of events across the province.

At an Open House in Toronto today, CHS introduced two new publications that will make a significant contribution to breaking down barriers that employers and businesses encounter in ensuring accessibility to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing staff, clients and customers:

- *Breaking the Sound Barriers: Employing People who are Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing*
- *Get Connected to Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People: A Guide for Service Providers and Businesses*

These publications were jointly funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Scotiabank Group.

"This three-way partnership between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors worked well and ensured that our final product meets and serves everyone's needs," says Kelly Duffin, CHS President and CEO.

"Becoming a more accessible society benefits everyone," says Carl DeFaria, Minister of Citizenship. "By preventing and removing barriers to people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing, opportunities for individuals to maximize their talents and skills are increased. As well, employers benefit from accessing an under-utilized labour force that can contribute to business productivity."

"Canadian companies benefit from a diverse workforce and it is our hope that these two publications provided by the CHS will serve as an excellent guide for organizations interested in breaking down the barriers for individuals who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing," says Arlene Russell, Vice President, Employment Relationships, Scotiabank.

Breaking the Sound Barriers is a binder with more than 55 pages of information for employers. It offers a comprehensive overview of deafness and hearing loss, recruiting, hiring and creating an accessible environment. It is also a blueprint for designing and implementing effective accommodation plans for both new employees and current employees who are experiencing the onset of hearing loss.

A Guide for Service Providers and Businesses is an 18-page brochure that provides information and resources to ensure effective and barrier-free communication. A CHS Awareness Survey, conducted in October 2001, revealed that nearly one in four adult Canadians reports experiencing some hearing loss. With such a high incidence of hearing loss, it makes good business sense for every workplace to be accessible to this sizeable population.

Both publications are available in hard copy. In addition, they are posted to the CHS Web site, where the French versions are also available.

Founded in 1940, CHS provides services that enhance the independence of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people and that encourage the prevention of hearing loss. CHS has 28 offices across Ontario.

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