CHS | SCO
CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE L'OUÏE

December 12, 2011

OPEN LETTER

Hon. Deb Matthews
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2C4

Hon. John Milloy
Ministry of Community and Social Services
6th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1E9

Hon. Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Municipal Affairs
and Housing
17th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2E5

Hon. Joe Dickson
Minister Responsible for Seniors
Room 1304, Whitney Block
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

Dear Ministers;

Re: Toronto Star Article dated Friday, December 9, 2011, Regarding 86-years-old Deaf Senior and her TCHC Eviction effective December 25, 2011

On behalf of The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), I am writing this letter to draw your immediate attention to the serious plight of a deaf senior resident of Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) who is facing eviction, bullying and discrimination at the hands of TCHC staff as described in Toronto Star article: Countdown to Christmas—and eviction, by Joe Fiorito.

We are requesting the government investigate this matter to determine if Toronto Community Housing Corporation's policies and practices comply with Ministries' policies, regulations, housing standards and the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Policy and Guidelines on Duty to Accommodate Persons with Disabilities as well the OHRC Policy on Human Rights and Rental Housing with respect to the protection of the rights of deaf senior residents.

Despite limited funding provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and LHINs for CHS General Support Services provided by our regions across Ontario, CHS Toronto Region does not receive funding from Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care or the Toronto Central LHIN for General Support Services Toronto (Ontario's largest city) to deal with a growing demand for supportive housing services needed by culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing tenants.

CHS also reaches out to residents of long-term care facilities who struggle with often-unrecognized or untreated issues of hearing loss, contributing to what are often already deplorable living conditions.

Regardless, the appropriate supports must be available to accommodate their disability. CHS's Hearing Care Counselling and General Support Services programs provide deaf, deafened and hard of hearing persons with counselling, home visits and communication devices. CHS CONNECT program offers mental health services. CHS also educates the public on the communication access needs of older persons who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing as well protecting their housing rights.

For many culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Ontarians living in public housing or apartments face harassment and discrimination and are afraid of speaking out in fear of reprisal and eviction. They reside without accessible, visual notification systems for doorbells, telephone or fire safety.

Public and private housing facilities and other providers of special services for older persons often deny culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing residents access to their housing public services and residential programs. As a result, older culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals have indicated that they want the right to choose between mainstream (usually inaccessible and unknowledgeable about this population) and specialized services (accessible experts in providing services to people with hearing loss), like those provided by CHS and the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf (BRCD).

CHS supports the objectives of the Ministry of Housing and Ministry Responsible for Seniors to educate and remove stereotypes and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities and seniors, and raise public awareness about human rights issues related to aging, and combat these attitudinal barriers. However, these objectives seem not to be shared by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

I look forward to receiving your findings as you investigate this serious matter and the need for the protection of persons with disabilities and seniors who are vulnerable.

Time is of the essence for this particularly vulnerable senior deaf woman, due to be evicted from TCHC on Christmas Day.

Sincerely yours

Chris Kenopic

Chris Kenopic
President and CEO

271 Spadina Road, Toronto, Ontario M5R 2V3
Tel. 416-928-2553 TTY. 1-877-216-7310 Fax. 416-928-2517
chs.ca
Charitable Registration Number 10684 6926 RR0001