

Canadian Hearing Society Continues to Bring its Strategic Plan to Life

May 1, 2018 – TORONTO, ON – This is the third in our series of updates reporting on the governance and operational progress at Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) since the Board approved its new strategic plan in June 2017.

As reported previously, the goal of this new strategic plan is to transform CHS. The organization's mission is to be the leading provider of programs, services and products to Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians. Over the next few years our plan is to build on our seventy-eight-year history to become a modern, progressive and professional organization. Many accomplishments have already been shared in the first two updates, here is a snapshot of our current priorities:

1. Progress Towards Improving Accessibility to CHS Programs and Services

a. Launching a new Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) platform.

In the coming months, CHS will begin rolling out WaveLink™, a new service that provides on-demand remote access to CHS interpreters for businesses, organizations and individuals. We are currently in discussions with banks, hotels, restaurants, government offices, colleges, first responders and many other organizations where communication is vital to deploy WaveLink™ and support those who are Deaf.

WaveLink™ enables Deaf employees or clients to immediately communicate anytime, anywhere by providing instant access to highly skilled and screened CHS sign language interpreters, in both ASL and LSQ. The technology is secure, confidential and helps ensure equal access is available for all, as outlined in AODA requirements. Easy to set up and simple to use, WaveLink™ is compatible with most smartphones, tablets, and operating systems.

b. Expanding access to hearing healthcare and audiology services.

For people to make use of CHS programs and services, easy access to our locations is vital. Beginning October 2018 CHS will start relocating and expanding our offices to be more central with easy access to public transit, highways and parking. The first office to relocate will be Ottawa where plans are well underway to select a new site.

In addition, over the next few years we will be doubling the number of locations with hearing care professionals who can perform hearing tests, dispense hearing

aids, and provide a broad range of hearing healthcare professional services. Our goal is to reach more Canadians in more communities.

c. Introducing an organization-wide Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System.

We are introducing a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in October 2018. This new CRM System will organize our client support data in one easy to access, highly secure location.

This will result in faster response times and better service for our clients. Communication about CHS programs and services will be clear, timely and accessible. In addition, we will also be able to easily access client feedback for continuous improvement.

d. Introducing a new organization-wide Learning Management System (LMS).

We are developing a new learning management tool that will make training and education more efficient. CHS employees will have access to consistent, professional training that will enhance their skills to better serve our clients. In addition, clients will soon have online access to program material including ASL course content and employment services resources. The new CHS LMS will launch in the summer of 2018.

2. Progress Toward Breaking Down Education and Employment Barriers

a. Expanding the Supplemental Employment Program.

Canadian Hearing Society has been awarded significant incremental funding of \$339,000 for Belleville and \$252,000 for Timmins for the 2018-2019 Supported Employment program. This program is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD). Its goal is to increase employability skills and job placements for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing in communities including Timmins and Belleville.

b. Attracting over 3,200 student applicants for summer internship program.

The CHS summer internship program allows students to gain valuable work experience leading to future employment opportunities. This year, student demand has been unprecedented. Departments across CHS are involved

including marketing & communications, IT, sales, finance, and fundraising at locations across Ontario. Students will start receiving offer letters May 18th.

c. Launching the new “Breaking Barriers” National Scholarship Campaign.

In 2018 CHS will be awarding up to \$100k in post-secondary education scholarships to Deaf and hard of hearing students. To build this critical fund and help remove financial barriers to education, CHS is launching a new national fundraising initiative. The “Breaking Barriers” Campaign will raise awareness and funds over a 6-week period, from May 11 to June 22, 2018. During the campaign, participants will share their photo or video stories about how they or others have overcome barriers to participation. These stories will be shared on social networks to solicit votes and donations. Participants will have a chance to win great prizes based on voting.

3. Progress Towards Modernizing the CHS Brand and Improving Services

a. Finalizing Professional Accreditation.

In 2017 CHS initiated an ambitious and rigorous process to achieve PRIMER accreditation under Accreditation Canada for all parts of CHS operations. Once completed, this accreditation will signify to all our clients and stakeholders that CHS operates with the highest professional standards in the industry – the same standards applied to other top tier clinical health and counselling service providers. Thanks to the efforts of everyone in the organization, this certification will be completed by July 2018.

b. Establishing Centers of Excellence for Interpreting and ASL Education.

Demand for qualified ASL / LSQ interpreters and ASL education continues to grow. To meet this demand and ensure the highest commitment to quality, CHS is establishing Centers of Excellence (COE) for Interpreting and ASL Education. Through these COE's, CHS will introduce new specialized standards, expand professional training and update course curriculums.

The new Interpreting COE will be launched at the July AVLIC conference in Niagara where CHS will also offer our current interpreter screening. ASL Education is embarking on a revitalization of the way we deliver sign language classes. We have experienced a significant and steady increase in the number

of Canadians wanting to learn ASL. To meet this demand, we will launch our ASL Education COE in early 2019.

c. Updating CHS brand and offices to reflect our new vision & mission.

CHS is undertaking a review of our brand to ensure it accurately represents the bold direction outlined in our strategic plan and reflects the breadth of programs and services we provide to the communities we serve. Over the coming months we will be seeking community input on all aspects of our brand.

In addition, CHS will ensure that each of our 23 offices reflect the mission and vision of CHS in a professional, accessible, modern setting. We began by relocating our Thunder Bay office to a superior, modern location in February. We will be updating all our offices to enhance our clients' experiences. These upgrades include large digital information screens, interactive iPads, visually accessible interiors, and improved access to assistive living devices.

CHS is committed to being the best provider of programs, services and products to the people we serve from coast to coast. Transformation towards a modern, progressive and professional organization is both satisfying and motivating. We will continue to provide progress updates on a regular basis.