

THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY
LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE L'OUÏE



**The Canadian Hearing Society's Response to Social
Development Canada's
Persons with Disabilities Consultation**

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Submitted by:

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Introduction to Hearing Loss

According to a federal government study, Canadians with hearing loss are the single largest disability group requiring accommodation.¹ It is also the fastest growing disability: aging is the number one cause of hearing loss and as the baby boom generation matures, there will be an explosion in its incidence.

Quite simply, when access and accommodation needs are not met, there is no equal opportunity for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians. In every aspect of the daily dialogue of life, whether big – education, health, employment, social, legal, family, attitudes – or small – ordering a pizza, watching a movie, calling a cab – the barriers faced by deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals are ever-present.

Often described as the “invisible” disability, deafness and hearing loss pose a significant and very complex barrier because unlike other disabilities, deafness and hearing loss create a barrier to communication. The ability to understand and be understood is the essence of communication and connections. When this ability is absent, people withdraw, become isolated and are relegated to the fringes of society. This isolation can lead to loss of self-esteem, depression, family breakdown, increased exposure to safety risks, lower levels of education and literacy, and increased unemployment.

While people sometimes imagine that barriers can be entirely removed by providing a sign language interpreter, this is not the case. Oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing individuals do not use sign language and have different access needs (see below). Furthermore, even for the Deaf individuals who could benefit from sign language interpreting, the chronic shortage of interpreters means they have infrequent access to this service. Interpreting is only funded for necessary services and even then the short supply means that interpreters for appointments with doctors or lawyers must be made weeks in advance and even then, an interpreter may not be available. There is no funding for interpreters in daily or social activities, such as family reunions or staff barbecues, so such access must be paid for by the individual requiring the service and most often, this would be unaffordable.

When an interpreter is not available, writing notes is a common fall-back strategy in interactions between Deaf and hearing individuals. However, written English can present its own barriers to Deaf Canadians. In Ontario, for instance, the reading average of a deaf individual graduating from a provincial school is at the grade 3 to 4 level, “which is not a reflection of the cognition of this group but on the educational practices used to teach literacy to a group who cannot hear the equivalent spoken sounds.”²

Written rather than signed communication is the preferred access method for oral deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing Canadians but there is currently no funding for the captioning that would meet their needs.

¹ *Living with Disability in Canada: An Economic Portrait*, Gail Fawcett, HRDC, 1996

² Dr. Cathy Chovaz McKinnon, Clinical Psychologist, in her submission to the Romanow Commission, 2001.

Full participation in Canadian society for people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing is a goal shared by Social Development Canada and The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) and has been clearly acknowledged in key legal and human rights legislation such as the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada's *Eldridge v British Columbia* decision, the Canadian Human Rights Act (section 2), and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms [Section 15 (1) and (2)].

However, the gap remains enormous between what is understood and enshrined in Canadian law and what is the everyday, common experience of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians in their interactions with the hearing world.

A Profile of Access Needs

To understand the distinct supports and accommodation needs of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians, it is important to understand their respective communication methods:

	Primary Communication Method	Communication Supports
Culturally Deaf Canadians	American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ)	Sign language interpreters Real time captioning Technical devices, including TTYs (text telephones), visual alerting devices
Oral deaf Canadians	Spoken language	Real time captioning Speech reading Technical devices, including cochlear implants
Deafened Canadians ("deafened" refers to a profound hearing loss experienced by people who have grown up hearing)	Spoken language for themselves, but cannot understand others' speech	Real time captioning Speech reading Technical devices, including cochlear implants
Hard of hearing Canadians	Spoken language	Real time captioning Speech reading Technical devices, including hearing aids, FM systems

One Family's Experience

The following excerpt from a letter written by the daughter of a woman who suddenly lost her hearing captures the experience most eloquently:

"My Mom recently became "entombed" in deafness as she calls it, by some unnamed and unexpected virus and over the course of a weekend our family's life changed forever. She'd always been a very vital, vibrant, social being who embraced life and the world and quite

quickly she became scared and solitary. With my dad being a stroke victim, it seemed like the last straw for their independence and life together. We didn't know where to turn.

“Sudden total hearing loss is scary for so many reasons: social isolation, personal safety and mental depression being just some of the many low lights. You are suddenly extracted from the world you spent your whole life in. To suddenly not be able to make the phone calls or answer the door – we were adrift alone as a family and it was dark and we couldn't hear a thing.

Response

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Social Development Canada's Persons with Disabilities Consultation and applauds the government for this important initiative.

1. Supports

In response to the question: "Do you have any ideas on how to make it easier for people to get needed supports?"

A. TECHNOLOGY AND ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Technology and devices are critical components in every deaf, deafened and hard of hearing citizen's arsenal of strategies to facilitate communication with the hearing world. The range of technical devices is growing in step with the extraordinary pace of technological innovation: digital hearing aids, cochlear implants, text messaging devices (e.g. Blackberries), TTYs (text telephones), visual alerting devices (e.g. baby monitors, fire alarms, door bell signalers), FM and Infrared systems, vibrating watches and alarm clocks. Technology plays a critical role in leveling the playing field for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians.

Too often these devices are so costly as to be beyond the means of many people with hearing loss. Though governments provide some subsidies for some devices, there is frequently considerable lag time between new devices arriving on the market and their approval for subsidy.

In addition, government contracts with service providers do not always allow for the provision of technology and assistive devices for either the service providers or their clients.

Recommendations

- 1. Government subsidies – both federal and provincial – for assistive devices need to keep pace with technological advances. For instance, pagers for deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians should be eligible for support.**
- 2. In addition, government contracts with service providers should cover costs for devices necessary to provide equitable and accessible service for deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians.**

B. PROFESSIONAL AND QUALIFIED SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue de Signes Quebecois (LSQ) interpreters facilitate communication and are knowledgeable in the language and culture of both culturally Deaf and hearing people.

There is critical shortage of professional qualified sign language interpreters. The shortage is even more severe in remote and rural areas. This shortage makes it difficult and frequently impossible for deaf people to access such necessary services as seeing a doctor. According to Clinical Psychologist Dr. Cathy Chovaz McKinnon “It is common for Deaf individuals not to have a family doctor given the huge barriers inherent even in phoning for an appointment, let alone trying to communicate with the doctor. As such, Deaf individuals tend to ignore their health care until such time that the problem is quite serious compromising the individual as well as requiring a more costly response from the medical professionals such as emergency care.”

In addition, there are only a handful of college interpreter programs across Canada and many of them have closed in recent years.

Recommendations

- 3. Governments – both federal and provincial – should review the funding for the continuum of the training necessary to expand the supply of qualified interpreters. Subsidies for college programs, recruitment campaigns, and internship programs should be explored to make this an attractive career option for more Canadians.**
- 4. Technology to enable remote service – such as videoconferencing or Video Relay Services (VRS) (see D below) should be funded to provide access in remote areas where in-person service is unavailable.**

C. PROFESSIONAL AND QUALIFIED REAL-TIME CAPTIONERS

Real-time captioners provide oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians with a simultaneous verbatim text of what is being said. There is an even more serious shortage of the highly specialized professionals.

In addition, most people, including government, are unfamiliar with this technology and the need for it. For instance, government meetings or public consultations often include the provision of sign language interpreters which is often thought to be sufficient for not only for deaf attendees but for those who are deafened or hard of hearing. However these groups do not use sign language. Because they rely on English and oral communication, real-time captioning is their necessary mode of access.

Recommendations

- 5. Governments – both federal and provincial – should review the funding for the continuum of the training necessary to expand the supply of qualified real-time captioners. Subsidies for college programs, recruitment campaigns, and internship programs should be explored to make this an attractive career option for more Canadians.**
- 6. Technology to enable distance service – such as remote captioning – should be funded to provide access in remote areas where in-person service is unavailable.**

D. VIDEO RELAY SERVICE

Video Relay Service (VRS) enables ASL-users to communicate with the hearing world through video technology rather than through the only current telecom solution in Canada, Bell Relay Service (BRS). Using a web camera and internet or cable technology, an interpreter is visible “on the line” with both an ASL-user and a hearing person in a three-way call. The interpreter signs the spoken messages to the deaf caller and speaks the signed messages to the hearing caller. This is preferable for many deaf individuals as it allows them to function in their first language, ASL, rather than in written English (as with BRS). English literacy levels are low among deaf Canadians and written English can therefore present a barrier to communication. VRS is now widely available in the U.S. and the U.K.

Recommendations

- 7. The federal government and the CRTC should fund the development and implementation of VRS in Canada. A levy on telephone service to all Canadians could offset the cost of this technology which is similar to the way BRS is currently funded.**
- 8. Some form of subsidy should be created to enable deaf Canadians who couldn’t otherwise afford this technology to acquire the web camera and other necessary hardware.**

2. Information, Public Spaces, and Transportation

In response to the question: “Do you have other ideas how to improve access to information, public spaces, transportation, or other aspects of a person’s environment?”

E. INFORMATION

Information is how we learn about the world around us. It is crucial to making informed decisions and choices in one’s life. Accessing information is very challenging for deaf,

deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians as their English literacy levels are generally far below that of their hearing counterparts. In Ontario, 52% have a low level of skill in document literacy, compared to 38% in the general population.

Many sources of information are based on spoken language: radio, TV, movies, and public address systems. In addition, many alerts, such as fire alarms, are auditory rather than visual. All of these are inaccessible to deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians.

Recommendations

- 9. Any written document produced by the government should also be “translated” and made available in the first language of Deaf Canadians, ASL or LSQ.**
- 10. In addition, the government should use plain language in all written documents.**
- 11. The captioning of TV, movies, public address systems must be mandatory.**
- 12. In particular, emergency planning and response protocols must include strategies for locating and informing deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians.**
- 13. Alerts and signals, such as those for fire alarms, must be visual rather than only auditory. Visual devices exist and must become mandatory.**
- 14. Awareness training should be provided to all government personnel who have contact with the general public. Public servants should know about the different communication strategies and needs of people with hearing loss in order to ensure equal access to public services.**

F. TRANSPORTATION

Clear, straightforward signage benefits everyone but is critical for deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians who, for instance, can't hear spoken announcements of flight changes or delays.

Recommendations

- 15. Signage must be clear and straightforward, written in plain language**
- 16. Public address systems and announcements must be captioned or otherwise visually displayed.**
- 17. Staff in tourist and travel information centres should be trained in different communication strategies to make transportation accessible to deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing citizens.**

G. PUBLIC SPACES

Public spaces often present considerable challenges to people with hearing loss. Without interpreting deaf people cannot access performances, religious services, or community meetings. Without captioning or amplification (such as FM or infrared systems), the same barriers exist for deafened or hard of hearing individuals.

Recommendations

- 18. Install amplification devices in all public meeting rooms, court rooms, government chambers. Consider legislation that would make it mandatory in all environments including theatres, churches, and synagogues.**
- 19. Educate public officials around enforcing the legislation that makes sign language interpreters available in public spaces. For instance, the court systems and hospitals legally provide for interpreting but too often public servants don't have the information necessary about how to retain them.**
- 20. In addition, wherever there are public pay phones, there should be public TTYs and all government communication that includes a phone number must contain a TTY number.**

3. Financial Stability

In response to the question: "Do you have ideas on how to improve financial stability for people with disabilities?"

Ensuring financial stability and economic independence for people with disabilities, including deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians, is the single most important area requiring government leadership. Public resources, policies, and programs should be directed to the full participation of people with disabilities in the marketplace. For people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing, the three critical areas that will make the most difference are: Education, Employment, and Health Care.

H. EDUCATION

The lower levels of written language literacy among Canadians with hearing loss, and particularly those who are deaf, have already been highlighted. This represents a failure of the primary education system that creates a fundamental and systemic barrier to future education and employment opportunities. The quality of elementary education for deaf children demands improvement.

The same can be said for access to higher education. Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing post-secondary students and trainees face systemic barriers daily: no/limited accessible resources, no teaching materials or supports in ASL; a chronic shortage of sign-language

interpreters and real-time captioners; understaffing and inaccessible communication at colleges and universities (i.e., difficulty booking sign language interpreters; staff without expertise on the needs of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing post-secondary students).

Increasing tuitions, reduced government funding particularly for deaf Canadians to attend Gallaudet University³, and the absence of subsidized accessibility supports combine to make the barriers insurmountable for most. It should come as no surprise, then, that in recent years, there has been a serious decline in the enrolment of Deaf Canadians at post-secondary educational institutions.

The following levels of education were reported for “persons who are unable to hear in one-person conversations” by Statistics Canada in 1992 but anecdotal evidence suggests that today’s statistics would be even worse:

Less than grade 8	52%
Secondary	24.4%
Trades certificate/diploma	13.1%
Post-secondary	7.9%
University degree	1.7%

Recommendations

- 21. Improve coordination between all levels of government responsible for education and review the education system to ensure deaf, deafened and hard of hearing students receive instruction that is accessible and equal in quality to the instruction received by their hearing counterparts.**
- 22. Establish and implement federal and provincial standards for sign language interpreters and real-time captioners in post-secondary education settings.**
- 23. Implement programs that provide specialized, accessible education and career support services for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing high school and post-secondary students and trainees to help them make informed choices about post-secondary training and education, see their choices through to graduation, or help them make the transition from one educational level to the next.**
- 24. Provide awareness training to educational support service providers to ensure that deaf, deafened and hard of hearing post-secondary students receive adequate career guidance.**

³ Located in Washington, D.C. Gallaudet University is the only university in North America where ASL is the language of instruction. In the past, the Canadian government provided more subsidies for Canadian students than it does presently.

I. EMPLOYMENT

Figure 1: The Economic Independence Pyramid for Deaf, Deafened and Hard of Hearing People

Figure 1 summarizes the major steps to economic independence for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people. The foundation of the pyramid is equal access, without which there can be no equal opportunity. Access provides the opportunity to education and training that in turn provide the opportunity for meaningful employment.

A landmark study, *Living with Disability in Canada: An Economic Portrait*, HRSDC (Fawcett, 1996) reported that labour force participation decreases with increased severity of any disability. Although individuals with mild hearing loss have a high rate of labour force participation (79.6%), this drops dramatically to 28.5% for individuals experiencing severe hearing loss.



One study estimated the unemployment rate of Deaf Canadians to be an astonishing 38%. Nor is the only problem *un*-employment: this same study reported that among those who are employed, almost two-thirds are *under*-employed (Roots & Kerr, 1998).

Recommendations

25. **Co-ordinate provincial and federal programs that support citizens with hearing loss in bridging from educational settings to employment opportunities.**
26. **Ensure that government-funded employment programs are accessible to Canadians with hearing loss. Contracted service providers must understand the barriers and solutions in detail and provide an accessible environment that also offers cultural awareness to their clients. They must have specialized knowledge to, for instance, to determine how much amplification would be required in an amplified phone, or be fluent in sign language, or understand and practice appropriate communication strategies. They must also be able to convey these issues and provide appropriate accommodation in the work environment.**
27. **Ensure that government-funded employment programs support job development and job maintenance functions. Too often, employers give up on new employees with hearing loss because communication strategies are not yet second-nature. It is imperative that supports – such as interpreting for supervision meetings – be available and funded until the employment relationship is stabilized.**
28. **Consider incentives and subsidies for employers who hire people with disabilities.**

- 29. Review policies and criteria for government funding to ensure that there are opportunities for under-employed Canadians to pursue new and better opportunities.**

J. HEALTH CARE

The inability to access health care can have tremendous economic consequences. Every Canadian has a right to receive health care and yet the barriers for Canadians with hearing loss are significant. In Ontario and elsewhere, protocols are in place for hospitals to call interpreters when a Deaf patient arrives in the emergency room, for instance. However, too often hospital personnel are not aware of these protocols and in emergency circumstances it is very difficult for Deaf people to advocate for themselves. For hard of hearing or deafened people who do not use sign language but rely on captioning, no such protocols even exist yet. For Canadians with hearing loss to remain healthy, access to the health care system must be in place.

A widespread problem remains the stigma associated with hearing loss. Perhaps because being hard of hearing is associated with aging, most adults take seven years to acknowledge their hearing loss and seek help. The intervening seven years can produce greater challenges in hearing and can have significant social, employment, and economic consequences. The lost opportunities and reduced quality of life are both a waste and can create a myriad of related problems.

Undetected hearing loss in children is also unnecessary and problematic. Countless studies indicate that the earlier the identification of hearing loss, the earlier the intervention can begin, mitigating any delay in language acquisition – signed or spoken. Undetected hearing loss has a serious impact on educational success and therefore, employment opportunities.

Recommendations

- 30. Ensure that protocols are in place to secure access for patients with hearing loss (interpreting or captioning services). Also ensure that medical personnel are aware of and trained on the protocols.**
- 31. Consider a public health campaign to de-stigmatize hearing loss and encourage adult Canadians to manage their hearing health.**
- 32. Ensure that hearing screening is in place for all infants. Where the program is new, add screening for school-age children who may be undiagnosed.**

4. Coordination of Disability-Related Programs

In response to the question: “Do you have other ideas on how to improve coordination of disability-related programs?”

K. CONTINUUM OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians would benefit greatly from improved coordination between federal, provincial and municipal programs. The field of education, from primary through to post-secondary, is a key determinant of a person's quality of life. If primary education fails to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills then access to secondary and post-secondary education is cut off and relegates that person to the fringes of society. Education and employment are fundamental to citizens' participation in Canadian society and to their physical, economic, and psychological well-being.

Recommendations

- 33. All levels of government must come together to ensure that the educational system does not fail Canadians with hearing loss. Following education, a system coordinated by all levels of government could support transitions from school to work.**

L. HEALTH AGENDA

The ability to access Canada's medical system is key to being and remaining a healthy participant in Canadian society.

Recommendations

- 34. All levels of government must come together to ensure that the medical system is accessible to people with hearing loss. Hearing loss must be on the federal health agenda and in the federal budget.**

4. Other Ideas

In response to the question: "Do you have other ideas on how to eliminate discrimination?"

M. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Attitudes in both the hearing population and in the population of people with hearing loss need to change. The systemic stigma towards hearing loss must be addressed. Serious attitudinal barriers exist in the expectations and behaviours of employers, educators and service providers including federal civil servants regarding the capabilities of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing persons.

Recommendations

- 35. A sustained public awareness campaign should be mounted to change the public perception and negative attitudes towards deafness and hearing loss. It should also encourage Canadians to take control of their hearing health.**

- 36. Develop and implement clear policies and procedures for providing access and accommodation for persons with disabilities, including deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers of federal service programs and third party programs that have federal contracts.**
- 37. Develop and implement policies and standards with regards to the provision of awareness/sensitivity training, confront and eradicate discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in the federal services and programs. In addition, provide regular, mandatory awareness training to all levels of federal personnel, about the unique communication needs of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians and how to meet these needs.**
- 38. Ensure that there is recognition of the needs of people with hearing loss in all programs and that funding is provided to meet these needs to ensure the program's success.**
- 39. Implement recommendations from previous studies, including:**
- a. *1996 Andy Scott Federal Task Force on Disability Report.*
Among other things, Andy Scott recommended that the Federal Government introduce a strong, effective and enforceable Canadians with Disabilities Act that would identify persons with disabilities, including deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals, as a discriminated-against group and strengthen enforcement mechanisms related to their protection. With the recent enactment of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the stage has been set for comparable national legislation addressing the needs of all Canadians with disabilities.
 - b. *Legislative Review of the Employment Equity Act Report: Canadian Human Rights Commission, Employment Equity Branch, Legislative Review of The Employment Equity Act, Report and Recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, April 2002*
 - c. *Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, May 2005*
 - d. *Report on National Study on Provincial and Federal Social and Financial Assistance Programs available to Deaf Canadians, (The Canadian Association of the Deaf, May 2005).*
 - e. *No Answer: A Review of Government of Canada Telephonic Communications with People who are Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing or have a Speech Impediment (Canadian Human Rights Commission, July 2005)*

Appendix 1: The Canadian Hearing Society

Founded in Toronto in 1940, The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) is a community-based, multi-service, non-profit agency serving the needs of the deaf, deafened and hard of hearing communities. It is the largest agency of its kind in Canada. It employs approximately 450 people, including deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing and hearing individuals, in 13 regional offices and 15 sub-offices throughout the province of Ontario.

CHS strives to develop high quality and accessible services in consultation with national, provincial, regional and local consumer groups and individuals. CHS provides a wide range of services, serving deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children, service providers and employers. Services are offered in a fully accessible and supportive environment by professionals experienced in meeting the unique needs of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people. CHS services include:

- American Sign Language (ASL) instruction
- ASL Teacher Training
- Audiology
- CONNECT Counselling (Mental Health Services)
- Educational Support Services
- Employment Services
- General Support Services
- Hearing Aid Program
- Hearing Care Counselling Program (55+)
- Hearing Help Classes
- Literacy & Basic Skills
- Communications
- Ontario Interpreting Services
- Speech-Language Pathology
- Technical Devices
- Tinnitus Retraining Therapy
- Videoconferencing

Appendix 2: Facts and Figures

- An estimated 135,000 working-age Ontarians (i.e., between the ages of 16 and 65) are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. Of this number, 36% (48,600) have difficulty hearing a group setting, 39% (52,650) have difficulty hearing one-to-one, and 25% (33,750) are completely unable to hear (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1998).
- Hearing loss is the fastest growing disability in North America.
- Aging is the number one cause of hearing loss. During the next decade, the working population aged 45 -64 will soar to 9.5 million. By 2016 the number of Canadians over 65 will hit 6 million.
- Noise is the second leading cause of hearing loss; it is cumulative, permanent and totally preventable
- Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians represent the largest disability group requiring accommodation (Fawcett, 1996)
- At about 1% of the population, culturally Deaf Canadians – those who use sign language as their first language - are a minority facing enormous systemic barriers.

Appendix 3: List of Recommendations

- 1. Government subsidies – both federal and provincial – for assistive devices need to keep pace with technological advances. For instance, pagers for deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians should be eligible for support.**
- 2. In addition, government contracts with service providers should cover costs for devices necessary to provide equitable and accessible service for deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians.**
- 3. Governments – both federal and provincial – should review the funding for the continuum of the training necessary to expand the supply of qualified interpreters. Subsidies for college programs, recruitment campaigns, and internship programs should be explored to make this an attractive career option for more Canadians.**
- 4. Technology to enable remote service – such as videoconferencing or Video Relay Services (VRS) (see D below) should be funded to provide access in remote areas where in-person service is unavailable.**
- 5. Governments – both federal and provincial – should review the funding for the continuum of the training necessary to expand the supply of qualified real-time captioners. Subsidies for college programs, recruitment campaigns, and internship programs should be explored to make this an attractive career option for more Canadians.**
- 6. Technology to enable distance service – such as remote captioning – should be funded to provide access in remote areas where in-person service is unavailable.**
- 7. The federal government and the CRTC should fund the development and implementation of VRS in Canada. A levy on telephone service to all Canadians could offset the cost of this technology which is similar to the way BRS is currently funded.**
- 8. Some form of subsidy should be created to enable deaf Canadians who couldn't otherwise afford this technology to acquire the web camera and other necessary hardware.**
- 9. Any written document produced by the government should also be “translated” and made available in the first language of Deaf Canadians, ASL or LSQ.**
- 10. In addition, the government should use plain language in all written documents.**

- 11. The captioning of TV, movies, public address systems must be mandatory.**
- 12. In particular, emergency planning and response protocols must include strategies for locating and informing deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians.**
- 13. Alerts and signals, such as those for fire alarms, must be visual rather than only auditory. Visual devices exist and should be mandatory.**
- 14. Awareness training should be provided to all government personnel who have contact with the general public. Public servants should know about the different communication strategies and needs of people with hearing loss in order to ensure equal access to public services.**
- 15. Signage must be clear and straightforward, written in plain language.**
- 16. Public address systems and announcements must be captioned or otherwise visually displayed.**
- 17. Staff in tourist and travel information centres should be trained in different communication strategies to make transportation accessible to deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing citizens.**
- 18. Install amplification devices in all public meeting rooms, court rooms, government chambers. Consider legislation that would make it mandatory in all environments including theatres, churches, and synagogues.**
- 19. Educate public officials around enforcing the legislation that makes sign language interpreters available in public spaces. For instance, the court systems and hospitals legally provide for interpreting but too often public servants don't have the information necessary about how to retain them.**
- 20. In addition, wherever there are public pay phones, there should be public TTYs and all government communication that includes a phone number must contain a TTY number.**
- 21. Improve coordination between all levels of government responsible for education and review the education system to ensure deaf, deafened and hard of hearing students receive instruction that is accessible and equal in quality to the instruction received by their hearing counterparts.**
- 22. Establish and implement federal and provincial standards for sign language interpreters and real-time captioners in post-secondary education settings.**

- 23. Implement programs that provide specialized, accessible education and career support services for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing high school and post-secondary students and trainees to help them make informed choices about post-secondary training and education, see their choices through to graduation, or help them make the transition from one educational level to the next.**
- 24. Provide awareness training to educational support service providers to ensure that deaf, deafened and hard of hearing post-secondary students receive adequate career guidance.**
- 25. Co-ordinate provincial and federal programs that support citizens with hearing loss in bridging from educational settings to employment opportunities.**
- 26. Ensure that government-funded employment programs are accessible to Canadians with hearing loss. Contracted service providers must understand the barriers and solutions in detail and provide an accessible environment that also offers cultural awareness to their clients. They must have specialized knowledge to, for instance, determine how much amplification would be required in an amplified phone, or be fluent in sign language, or understand and practice appropriate communication strategies. They must also be able to convey these issues and provide appropriate accommodation to employers for their work environment.**
- 27. Ensure that government-funded employment programs support job development and job maintenance functions. Too often, employers give up on new employees with hearing loss because communication strategies are not yet second-nature. It is imperative that supports – such as interpreting for supervision meetings – be available and funded at least until the employment relationship is stabilized.**
- 28. Consider incentives and subsidies for employers who hire people with disabilities.**
- 29. Review policies and criteria for government funding to ensure that there are opportunities for under-employed Canadians to pursue new and better opportunities.**
- 30. Ensure that protocols are in place to secure access for patients with hearing loss (interpreting or captioning services). Also ensure that medical personnel are aware of and trained on the protocols.**
- 31. Consider a public health campaign to de-stigmatize hearing loss and encourage adult Canadians to manage their hearing health care.**

- 32. Ensure that hearing screening is in place for all infants. Where the program is new, add screening for school-age children who may be undiagnosed.**
- 33. All levels of government must come together to ensure that the educational system does not fail Canadians with hearing loss. Following education, a system coordinated by all levels of government could support transitions from school to work.**
- 34. All levels of government must come together to ensure that the medical system is accessible to people with hearing loss. Hearing loss must be on the federal health agenda and in the federal budget.**
- 35. A sustained public awareness campaign should be mounted to change the public perception and negative attitudes towards deafness and hearing loss. It should also encourage Canadians to take control of their hearing health care.**
- 36. Develop and implement clear policies and procedures for providing access and accommodation for persons with disabilities, including deaf, deafened and hard of hearing customers of federal service programs and third party programs that have federal contracts.**
- 37. Develop and implement policies and standards with regards to the provision of awareness/sensitivity training, confront and eradicate discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in the federal services and programs. In addition, provide regular, mandatory awareness training to all levels of federal personnel, about the unique communication needs of deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Canadians and how to meet these needs.**
- 38. Ensure that there is recognition of the needs of people with hearing loss in all programs and that funding is provided to meet these needs to ensure the program's success.**
- 39. Implement recommendations from previous studies, including:**
 - a. *1996 Andy Scott Federal Task Force on Disability Report.* Among other things, Andy Scott recommended that the Federal Government introduce a strong, effective and enforceable Canadians with Disabilities Act that would identify persons with disabilities, including deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals, as a discriminated-against group and strengthen enforcement mechanisms related to their protection. With the recent enactment of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the stage has been set for comparable national legislation addressing the needs of all Canadians with disabilities.

- b. *Legislative Review of the Employment Equity Act Report*: Canadian Human Rights Commission, Employment Equity Branch, Legislative Review of The Employment Equity Act, Report and Recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, April 2002
- c. *Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities*, May 2005
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- e. *No Answer: A Review of Government of Canada Telephonic Communications with People who are Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing or have a Speech Impediment* (Canadian Human Rights Commission, July 2005)