



Hon. Charles Sousa  
Minister of Finance  
c/o Budget Secretariat  
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor  
95 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1

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Delivered via: [submissions@ontario.ca](mailto:submissions@ontario.ca)

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), in response to Ministry of Finance's Pre-Budget Consultation-2014, we are writing today to inform you that there is a growing concern about hearing health for Ontarians and we need your support. Please find attached our CHS submission for your review and serious consideration of our recommendations for F2015 budget.

In March 2013, we sent you a copy of CHS's submission to that year's Pre-Budget Consultation. To date, the Government of Ontario and Ministry of Finance have made little progress in response to our recommendations.

We understand the focus of the current budget is to create jobs and improve services for the people of Ontario, while eliminating the deficit. With that in mind, CHS has prioritized our pre-Budget requests focusing on where the need of our consumers is greatest and where a strategic investment can deliver a cost savings to the government. Our pre-budget submission focuses on the following three areas: a Hearing Healthcare Initiative for Ontario, Mental Health Diversion Services, and Employment Services. These are the areas where additional resources are most urgently needed.

Hearing loss is a widespread and growing problem yet it continues to be a low priority in Ontario's healthcare system. Ten percent of Ontarians have significant hearing loss – enough to impact their daily lives and access to information and services – and because aging is the number one cause of hearing loss, the incidence is growing rapidly, making hearing loss the fastest growing disability in Ontario.

Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic condition in aging adults and has important effects on their physical and mental health. Aging adults with hearing loss are at an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, other forms of dementia and diabetes. Surprisingly, the practice of testing hearing among seniors is not routine in Ontario.

Recent studies report that 1 in 5 youth has signs of hearing loss. Most common among youth is noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) which is irreversible despite being mostly preventable. Young people with severe hearing loss often disengage socially and have an increased dependence on social support services.

Hearing loss negatively impacts household income by an average of \$11,000 per year. The costs of unassisted hearing loss costs Canada approximately \$17.6 billion per year. The management of hearing loss needs to be improved to reduce the impacts on provincial health and social support systems.

Founded in 1940, CHS is the leading provider of services, products, and information that remove barriers to communication, advance hearing health, and promote equity for people who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing. Our specialized services are accessible and we possess unique expertise in overcoming the nature of the communication barriers presented by different levels of hearing loss. Through our support programs we serve working age individuals, families and children assisting them with housing, employment, life skills, citizenship, and counselling as needed. These programs play an essential role in supporting Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing Ontarians to begin to break free from the cycle of poverty.

We look forward to working collaboratively with the government to ensure that Ontarians who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing have the support and access to hearing health care that they need. Our pre-budget submission demonstrates how we can work together to achieve that goal. We would be pleased to present our submission to the Standing Committee on Finance should formal pre-budget consultation presentations be taking place.

We look forward to meeting with you and invite you to join us for a tour of our head office facility in Toronto at your earliest convenience. We will contact your office in the coming days to follow up on this request. In the meantime, should you require any further information please contact Mary Lumgair at 416-928-2553 or [mlumgair@chs.ca](mailto:mlumgair@chs.ca).

For additional background information, please find enclosed following attachments:

1. Toward a Hearing Healthcare Initiative for Ontario
2. Mental Health
3. The Economy and Employment
4. Cost Impact Summary for Mental Health Services, Hearing Care Counselling, General Support Services and Employment Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Ministry of Finance's 2014 Pre-Budget Consultation.

Yours sincerely,



President and CEO

c.c. Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario

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