



Mr. John Lawford
Public Interest Advocacy Centre
ONE Nicholas Street, Suite 1204
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7B7

13 October 2005

Dear Mr. Lawford,

RE: CISC Accessibility Issues Ad-hoc Working Group

I write on behalf of the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) with regards to the above group, as well as the sub-committee chaired by Sam Yung which is working on the related issue of VoIP Message Relay Service (MRS).

The CAD, as the national information and research organization of Canada's 310,000 profoundly Deaf citizens who use Sign language, has been an acknowledged leader on telecommunications accessibility for 65 years. Indeed, it was the CAD which achieved the creation of MRS from coast to coast through its series of petitions to the CRTC throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Our leadership continues to this day, as we have issued a call for proposals to establish a national Video Relay Service (VRS) which would complement MRS by providing on-screen Sign-interpreted relay service through Internet Protocol. You may refer to our website for further information on this latest initiative (www.cad.ca).

It is, therefore, very puzzling and disappointing that the CAD was not consulted for inclusion in the two above-mentioned committees, or even alerted to their creation. Even if our work in the field is discounted, we still not only represent but actually *are* the users of MRS/VRS, since all of our members are themselves Deaf Signers. The foremost users of MRS/VRS should have a voice at the tables of these committees; as the motto of the international disability community states, there must be "Nothing about us without us."

We request that your committee's report to the CRTC mention our involuntary exclusion from the discussions of the two committees, and that it recommend that the CRTC take steps to ensure the Canadian Association of the Deaf is a "default consultant" in all telecommunications issues that impact directly upon the needs and rights of Canadians who are Deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing.

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The Canadian Association of the Deaf
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In addition, the CRTC should already have a budget allocation for the provision of support services that will enable the participation of persons with disabilities in all activities, including committee work and participation as experts and consultants. While it is not an ideal situation that such work is often carried out through teleconferencing (since Deaf participants are at an obvious disadvantage in such a set-up), it becomes impossible *only* if the CRTC does not provide the resources for support services that is required under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

We look forward to the opportunity to participate more fully and equitably in the proceedings of the CRTC and its committees in future.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

James Roots
Executive Director - Chief Administration Officer

cc: Henry Vlug, legal consultant to the CAD

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