



# News Release Communiqué

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Ontario Commission  
Human Rights ontarienne des  
Commission droits de la personne

## **Human Rights Settlement Wins Hotel Visual Fire Alarms for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guests**

For Immediate Release  
Toronto, January 30, 2008

The Ontario Human Rights Commission has reached a settlement between the Days Hotel and Conference Centre, Toronto Airport East and hotel guest Barbara Dodd. The settlement will see the establishment of new fire safety practices for the hotel and sets a positive example for the use of visual strobe light fire alarms for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals in Ontario hotel accommodations as an important practice to be followed by the hospitality industry province-wide.

Ms. Dodd, who is Deaf, stayed at the Days Hotel for a special event. In the early morning, the fire alarm went off, unbeknownst to her and other deaf guests. Although it was a false alarm, the hotel, like many other hotels, did not have a visual fire alarm system in place to warn deaf patrons of a fire.

The agreement will see the installation of a strobe light fire alarm system in select locations of the hotel, including the lobby, restaurant, swimming pool area, ballroom, public washrooms and four selected guest rooms. Rooms equipped with visual fire warning devices will be reserved for people identifying themselves as deaf or hard of hearing until all other rooms are occupied.

The hotel will also be developing and implementing policies and procedures for safely accommodating visitors who are deaf or hard of hearing, in consultation with the Commission, Ms. Dodd and expert advisors.

"This settlement is a win-win for all concerned," stated Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. "When the retrofit is complete, the Days Hotel and Conference Centre can advertise itself as an accessible destination for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss."

"Fires can endanger lives. Visual and other types of fire signalling devices are a necessity for many people and should not be considered optional," Commissioner Hall added. "To ensure safety and accessibility for everyone, all Ontario hotels should quickly follow suit."

Industry associations applaud the settlement, which will support their efforts to provide leadership and resources to their members to meet accessibility requirements. Terry Mundell, President of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, points to the new Hospitality Accessibility Checklist featured on the association Website, [www.gtha.com](http://www.gtha.com), along with a comprehensive list of resources, suppliers and products to ensure hotels

provide safe services to guests with disabilities. The checklist was developed with assistance from the EnAbling Change Program of the Accessibility Directorate of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services.

“We’re taking accessibility very seriously and will continue to provide tools like the Checklist to help support our industry to increase hotel safety and accessibility for all Ontarians,” Mr. Mundell explained. “We encourage our members to invest in a number of important measures to meet the needs of people with disabilities as soon as possible, and ensuring fire safety is paramount among them.”

Said Rob Evans, President of the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association, “We will be communicating the Commission settlement to our membership with the view to encouraging them to provide similar measures on their premises.” Mr. Evans added, “As co-developers of the Hospitality Accessibility Checklist, which is prominent on our Website, [www.orhma.com](http://www.orhma.com), accommodation for individuals with special needs, such as a hearing disability, is a priority issue within our industry. This not only makes good business sense but also ensures an enhanced, safe and comfortable stay for our patrons with special needs.”

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Aussi disponible en français.

Please see Backgrounder for more details. For more information, please refer to the OHRC *Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate* and other resources at [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca) or contact:

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