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September 19, 2008

Brenda Kritzer, Director
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Corporate and Direct Services Division
Individual Eligibility Review Branch
3rd Floor, 5700 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M2M 4K5

Dear Ms. Kritzer,

Thank you for your letter dated July 2, 2008 which was written in response to our request about funding assistance for visual smoke detectors for Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people under the Ministry's Assistive Devices Program (ADP).

We are writing this time to ask for an update on the Sensory Standing Committee's response to our request. You indicated in your letter that they would be meeting in August 2008 and were asked to consider this very important issue.

We hope that they have given this matter serious consideration for the following reasons:

- Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing home owners are required by law to ensure their homes are equipped with smoke detectors.
- The cost of purchasing and installing visual smoke detectors is cost-prohibitive for many Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing homeowners, this cost has been as high as \$1,000.
- The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation eligibility screening is targeted at individuals and families living near or below the poverty line; yet the many Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing homeowners who do not qualify for this program cannot afford the expense.
- Eligible tax deductions as determined by the Canada Revenue Agency provides a tax credit for taxpayers with a certified disability and medical expenses that extends a certain percentage of their income. Tax relief for the purchase of visual smoke detectors is not included.
- Last but not least, fire safety for all Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals and their families should be the utmost priority.

Should the committee have any further technical or procedural questions regarding the possibility of providing funding assistance for visual smoke detectors, The Canadian Hearing Society would be the best agency to contact. Jo-Ann Bentley, Provincial Co-ordinator, Communication Devices Program (jbentley@chs.ca), and Gary Malkowski, Special Advisor to the CEO (gmalkowski@chs.ca), would be two excellent resources for further assistance.

We hope to hear from you sometime in the near future regarding the provision of financial assistance for visual smoke detectors. We ask that you please take the time to review the position paper developed by The Canadian Hearing Society (www.chs.ca) on this topic.

Sincerely,

Don Kinsley, Chair

cc: Durham Deaf Accessibility Committee – Mike Finnegan, Veronica Bickle, Gordon Ryall, Beverley Dooley, Kim Reid, Tony Flemming and Mirek Swiecicki
cc: Maggie Doherty-Gilbert, Regional Director, The Canadian Hearing Society, Peterborough, Durham and City of Kawartha Lakes Regions
cc: Gary Malkowski, Special Advisor to the CEO, The Canadian Hearing Society
cc: Jo-Ann Bentley, Provincial Co-ordinator, Communication Devices Program, The Canadian Hearing Society
cc: Paul Smith, Executive Director, Ontario Association of the Deaf