

Ministry of Community Safety
and Correctional Services

Ministère de la Sécurité communautaire
et des Services correctionnels

Office of the Minister

Bureau du ministre

25 Grosvenor Street
18th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 1Y6
Tel: 416-325-0408
Fax: 416-325-6067

25, rue Grosvenor
18^e étage
Toronto ON M7A 1Y6
Tél.: 416-325-0408
Téléc.: 416-325-6067



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MAR 20 2009

Mr. Don Kinsley
Chair
Durham Deaf Accessibility Committee
13 - 575 Thornton Road North
Oshawa ON L1J 8L5

Dear Mr. Kinsley:

Thank you for your letter regarding Durham Region's deaf community and its concerns over the high costs of installing smoke alarms for the hearing impaired. I am pleased to respond and apologize for the delay.

The Ontario Building Code and the Ontario Fire Code both identify the need to install, in residential premises, smoke alarms that must, by definition, sound an alarm. Historically, the general viewpoint has held that this basic and long-standing requirement of both codes provides the most expedient way to alert people of an emergency. Nevertheless, hearing impaired persons may choose to install additional smoke alarms that have features suited specifically to their special needs, since an audible alarm alone may not adequately alert them of danger. Such installations, however, cannot be made in lieu of code requirements. They can only supplement them to enhance the fire safety of occupants.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) administers two programs that may be helpful for certain individuals who require specialized smoke alarms—the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities and the Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence program. People who need financial assistance to obtain a specialized smoke alarm system and who are neither Ontario Disability Support Program recipients nor Ontario Works clients may wish to contact the CMHC directly via its website at www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/ or by telephone, toll free, at 1-800-704-6488 for further information. The CMHC does receive inquiries through the Bell Relay Service.

Individuals may also wish to contact the Canada Revenue Agency via its website at www.cra-arc.gc.ca or by telephone, toll free, at TTY1-800-665-0354 to inquire about eligible deductions on their income tax returns. Individuals can also access the services of non-profit community organizations such as the Salvation Army, or local service clubs, such as the Lion's Club, to see whether they can help defray some of the costs of a specialized smoke alarm system. Additionally, local fire departments can be contacted to determine if they have a local program that may assist with this need.

I trust you will find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

Rick Bartolucci, MPP, Sudbury
Minister