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Christine Reaume
President
Association of Visual Sign Language Interpreters of Canada
110 - 39012 Discovery Way
Squamish, British Columbia
V8B 0E5

March 5, 2013

Dear Ms. Reaume,

Re: Concerns about Granting Professional Membership Status

The Durham Deaf Accessibility Committee was established five years ago with our main focus being advocacy for improved accessibility for the Deaf community in the Durham Region in Ontario. One of our current priorities is to advocate for better accessibility for Deaf children using American Sign Language in mainstreamed schools in our area.

Interpreters with subpar skills that are often hired by school boards have a detrimental life-long impact on Deaf students if they are not able to access the education they need in order to succeed in their educational and vocational careers. We are aware that there is a widespread concern about the skills of sign language interpreters hired by school boards in this province.

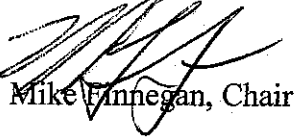
The main reason we are writing to AVLIC is to share our concern that anyone who consider themselves to be a qualified interpreter can obtain AVLIC membership and this contribute to the assumption that their interpreting skills is professionally acceptable. There is no screening and the minimally accepted credential to become a member is to have graduated from an interpreter training program. As a consequence, this leads to our local school boards to have the misconception that interpreters with AVLIC membership would have skills that is of a professional acceptable standard.

As Deaf adults, we are concerned about this. School boards are able to point out that their interpreters are registered with AVLIC and this lends false credibility to those who are not qualified enough to interpret. We are disappointed that AVLIC is allowing this to happen.

We are recommending that AVLIC establish separate tiers of membership, one being an associate member supporting the causes of AVLIC and the other being a full-fledged member meaning that he/she has been screened and meets the minimal necessary credentials of a professional interpreter.

We would like to ask if AVLIC is actively looking into this matter? Is there any action or plans undertaken to rectify this oversight? Is there anything we can do to help advocate this issue to a broader audience?

With thanks,



Mike Finnegan, Chair

cc: Durham Deaf Accessibility Committee – Don Kinsley, Veronica Bickle, Gordon Ryall, Beverley Dooley, Kim Reid, Mirek Swiecicki, Behishta Mushtaq, Bryan Meany and Robert Lang.

cc: Maggie Doherty-Gilbert, Regional Director, The Canadian Hearing Society, Peterborough, York, Durham and City of Kawartha Lakes Regions

cc: Gary Malkowski, Special Advisor to the CEO, The Canadian Hearing Society

cc: Courtney Cockburn, President, Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters

cc: Wayne Nicholson, President, Ontario Association of the Deaf

cc: Dean Walker, Executive Director, Ontario Association of the Deaf

cc: Phyllis Beaton-Vazquez, ASL-English Interpreter Program Coordinator, George Brown College