



# Ontario Association of the Deaf Inc.

FOUNDED 1886 – INCORPORATED 1963

2395 Bayview Ave.

Toronto, Ontario M2L 1A2

Consultation and  
Training

Consumer Advocacy  
(Children and Adults)

Deaf Outreach Project  
TTY: 416-413-1093  
FAX: 416-413-4822

Deaf Youth Leadership  
Camp

Homeless Project

Mayfest  
(Annual Community  
Festival)

Women Issues

Travelling Hands

Affiliated with  
Canadian Association  
of the Deaf

October 6, 2003

Premier-Designate, Dalton McGuinty  
Room 381, Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A4

Dear Premier-Designate, Dalton McGuinty,

**Re: Ontarians with Disabilities Act and American Sign Language/ Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) Regulation**

On behalf of the Ontario Association of the Deaf, we are writing this letter to extend our congratulations to you and the Liberal party on its majority victory in last Thursday's election. We are really looking forward to working together with you and your new government, on implementing your promise to enact a strong, effective and enforceable Ontarians with Disabilities Act, including ASL/LSQ regulations within your first year in office.

The Ontario Association of the Deaf requests your immediate attention to ensure new Cabinet approval of a regulation for the use of American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) as languages of instruction to be included in the *Education Statute Amendment Act, 1993*. This Act authorizes the development of a regulation for the use of ASL and LSQ as languages of instruction for deaf and hard of hearing students.

We are very pleased your Party's commitment and your personal commitment to these issues over years as you were a leader of official Opposition at that time especially with Liberal MPP Ernie Parsons's excellent leadership to preserve the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, the Canada's Oldest Provincial School for the Deaf.

We are very much appreciated that your Party's fought years through your

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Party's unanimous support for the October 29, 1998 legislative resolution, introduced by Liberal MPP Dwight Duncan in support to enshrine the 11 principles for the ODA to be strong and effective and also the Liberal Party's excellent report on the need for a strong Ontarians with Disabilities Act that resulted from Mr. Peters' public consultation tour.

The first proposal for the Ontarians with Disabilities Act introduced into the Ontario Legislature for debate was Bill 168. Tabled in 1994, it was not a Government bill, sponsored by the then Ontario Government. Rather it was introduced by then-MPP York East Gary Malkowski, North America's first elected culturally Deaf politician, as a Private Members Bill. Although Mr. Malkowski was a member of the NDP, the governing party at the time, his bill did not have official government backing and sponsorship.

Nevertheless, Bill 168 received unanimous bi-partisan approval in the Ontario legislature at both first and second readings in 1994. It was referred to the Ontario legislature's Standing Committee on Justice, which convened public hearings on the bill on short notice in December of 1994. People with disabilities moved quickly to support the need for this kind of legislation. That legislative process was cut short by the spring 1995 provincial election. The legislative process on Bill 168 was never completed. Bill 168 died when the 1995 election was called.

During the 1995 Ontario election campaign, the ODA Committee wrote to all three parties asking for a strong, clear commitment from each that they would introduce and pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act if they were elected.

In a letter dated May 24, 1995, Mike Harris, on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, made a solemn written election promise to the ODA Committee to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act in the first term of his government "within the economic goalposts of The Common Sense Revolution." He pledged in that letter "to work together with your Committee in the development of such legislation". He also wrote about the accommodation of needs of persons with disabilities, saying, "We hope, through cost efficiencies achieved in other areas of government, to direct much needed funding to accommodation." The Ontario Progressive Conservatives made other campaign commitments in other forums including a promise on May 5, 1995 to introduce into Ontario a new Workplace Equal Opportunity Plan. The plan expressly recognizes the systemic barriers confronting persons with disabilities. To the ODA Committee, a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act can and should form a core element of such a plan, if the plan is to be meaningful.

With a new majority of Liberal government, you and the Liberal give us a new ray of hope that you and your new government will implement your promise by strengthening the strong, effective and enforceable Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This will end the past eight years of unbearable, frustration, vulnerable and hopeless years as the last Tory government has ignored this important issue.

I would like to invite you to give a speech on Saturday May 15, 2004 in the celebration of the Ontario Association of the Deaf's 15<sup>th</sup> years anniversary of the Deaf Ontario Now-Deaf Education Movement. At that time, Hon. Sean Conway, Minister of Education implemented the recommendations of the Minister of Education's Advisory Committee on Deaf Education for Review of Ontario Education Programs for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students by the introduction and implementation of the use of ASL/LSQ as languages of instructions at the Provincial Schools for the Deaf in 1990.

I look forward to receiving a letter of confirmation of your attendance for May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at evening time. Please accept our invitation to come and join in the celebration of 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Deaf Ontario Now-Deaf Education Movement on Saturday, May 15 at 8pm at the Delta Chelsa Hotel in Toronto and you will be first Ontario Premier to deliver a speech at the Ontario Association of the Deaf event in the Ontario Association of the Deaf since the OAD is founded in 1886.

Again, please accept our congratulations and our 100% support of your new mandate as a new era has begun.

Yours sincerely,



Dean Walker  
President  
Ontario Association of the Deaf

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Kelly Duffin, President and CEO, Canadian Hearing Society  
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Joe Gignac, Executive Director, Goal: Ontario Literacy for the Deaf, (GOLD)  
Maureen Haan, Executive Director, Silent Voice  
Derek Rumball, Executive Director, Rumball Centre for the Deaf  
Louise Gagne, Executive Director, Huronia Hearing Impaired  
Yvonne Hill, Executive Director, Durham Deaf Services  
Louise Ford, Executive Director, Ottawa Deaf Centre  
Jim Roots, Executive Director, the Canadian Association of the Deaf  
Darren Holst, President, Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf  
Rohan Smith, President, Ontario Deaf Sports Association  
Phyllis Gordon, Executive Director, Advocacy Resource Centre for Persons with Disabilities  
Keith Norton, Chief Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission