

December 15, 2005

Dear .....

As the Canadian election has been called for January 23, 2006, now is the time when national political parties will be looking towards effective communication strategies to get the message to the Canadian electorate. In the past, interested citizens across this great land have struggled to participate during the campaign due to the absence of accessible communication strategies such as assistive listening devices (ALD) FM and Infrared transmitter/receivers; TTY technology and; captioning. This year the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association seeks the understanding that your political policies shall insist on having such equipment available to your candidates for their campaign offices, town hall meetings and all public events so that your campaigning shall be inclusive to and welcoming all people to the process regardless of ability, affiliation, culture, etc.

In years past access to party meetings in public venues has been difficult and in many cases non-existent for many due to the lack of awareness and understanding to the needs of the people. As Canada's only not-for-profit consumers Hard of Hearing / Late-deafened association, we implore you to look at the constituency of persons with disabilities. Over 14% of citizens are affected by hearing loss, the **invisible disability**. Their vote is important thus access must be a major concern and a high priority. As leaders has been known to say *'every vote counts'*. Well, this year, start the process correctly and ensure all candidates have a TTY in their campaign office that ALDs and captioning be included as necessary items for your road towards effectively communicating rather than creating the systemic and communication barriers again. All people want and have the democratic right to participate in Canada's electoral process including the campaigns.

Our members across Canada will be watching and listening to the messages of your campaign team and the new government's leadership for inclusion of all people in Canada's democracy process.

Our Chapters and Branches across Canada are poised to help when you call for assistance.

Yours truly,

Concerned Hard of Hearing Citizen

c.c. Ms. Carole Willans-Théberge, President, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association  
Ms. Janice McNamara, Executive Director, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association  
Mr. Colin Cantlie, Chair, (CHHA) Government Relations Committee