

Dear Valued Business Owner,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this letter. As you know, we are going through an unprecedented time which has proven difficult for all. With businesses starting to reopen, some guidelines require the use of masks.

We wanted to write to you to explain that Canadians with varying degrees of hearing loss are faced with daily challenges, which just got harder. According to the Canadian Hearing Service in Canada, 1 out of every 4 adult Canadians report having some form of hearing loss (Canadian Hearing Services, 2013). With the 6-feet apart rule and the use of masks blocking sounds, the transmission of clear speech is severely restricted. Many Canadians that live with a hearing loss rely heavily on lipreading and not being able to read lips is becoming a daily frustration, and for some, creating anxiety interacting in public. We wanted to share with you some suggestions that you can incorporate into your daily service to help increase communication proficiency between all of your staff and customers.

Suggestions:

- Educating staff on communication needs; *do not assume that everyone can hear you*
- Face customers when speaking; *make sure you have the customer's attention first*
- Be **patient** and **kind**; we are all in this together
- Speak slowly and clearly, but refrain from yelling
- Print out common phrases or questions according to your business (ie; COVID-19 symptoms checklist upon entering, do you have a rewards card? Debit, VISA or cash? What would you like done with your hair? Etc.)
- When repeating a statement, rephrase it differently to allow further context ("How would you like to pay today?" to "Are you using cash, credit or debit?")
- Have a small whiteboard/pen and paper next to you to write what you'd like to communicate
- Using the note app on a phone to communicate
- Calm hand gestures; pointing, thumbs up/down
- Whenever possible, use transparent masks to allow lipreading

Using these suggestions will help your staff interact with all customers during this difficult time. We want to help you promote a positive experience for all of your customers by supporting you with communication suggestions. If you have any further questions, please contact Hannah Wade at hwade@chha.ca. Thank you for your support!