

# Position Paper: Canadian Association of the Deaf - Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC)

## Introduction

The **Canadian Association of the Deaf - Association des Sourds du Canada (CAD-ASC)** is the oldest national consumer organization representing Deaf individuals in Canada. Founded in 1940, CAD-ASC advocates for the rights, needs, and concerns of Deaf Canadians. The organization provides consultation, information, and support to the public, businesses, media, educators, governments, and other entities. CAD-ASC conducts research, issues reports, and develops pilot programs and best practices to promote accessibility and equality for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard-of-hearing and Deaf & disabled individuals who sign[1].

## Position Statement

The CAD-ASC calls for immediate action to address the systemic barriers faced by Deaf and Deaf-Blind Canadians. These barriers include discriminatory practices, inadequate safety standards, and limited access to essential services. The following points highlight the critical areas of concern:

1. **UN CRPD Support of Primary Languages:** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) supports the recognition and use of primary languages, such as ASL, LSQ and Indigenous sign languages, to ensure full participation in society. Canada, as a signatory, must uphold these principles to promote linguistic and cultural identity for Deaf individuals[2].
2. **Undue Hardship Exemptions:** The undue hardship exemptions in every provincial human rights code provide a legal loophole that allows landlords and employers to discriminate against Deaf individuals. These exemptions undermine the duty to accommodate and must be re-evaluated to prevent discrimination[3]. In the meantime, Deaf people are economically deprived.
3. **Current Building Codes, Fire Codes, and Safety Standards:** Most existing building codes, fire codes, and Canadian safety standards fail to adequately protect Deaf and Deaf-Blind Canadians. These standards must be updated to include accessible safety measures, such as visual and vibrating alarms and communication devices[4][5] to ensure every Canadians' safety in their homes.
4. **Lack of Safety and Income:** The limited safety measures and income opportunities for Deaf individuals restrict their ability to achieve home ownership. This lack of support perpetuates economic inequality and limits the dreams of many within the Deaf community[6][7].
5. **Call for Updated Safety Standards:** CAD-ASC urges the federal, territorial and provincial governments to update their Building Codes, and Fire Codes, as well as the Canadian Safety standards to mandate the installation smoke and CO2 alarms that alert Deaf and Deaf-Blind individuals through wired and wireless systems in both multi-residential and residential housing[4][5].

6. **Provision of VRI for Employers:** The Federal government should provide Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services to employers who cannot hire interpreters by reason of undue hardship. This will ensure Deaf individuals have equal access to employment opportunities and earnings, facilitating their ability to achieve home ownership[8].
7. **Inclusion in Federal Housing Projects:** All federal housing projects or funding programs for affordable housing include criteria that address the safety concerns of the Deaf and Deaf-Blind community. This will ensure that housing developments are accessible and safe for all residents[9].
8. **Support for Deaf Communities:** Housing supports for Deaf and Deaf-Blind individuals should foster a sense of community, including access to associations, organizations, and interpreting services. To place a Deaf or Deaf-Blind person in a home, with a doorbell, ignores the many needs and supports required to make a house a home. This holistic approach will enhance the quality of life and independence for Deaf Canadians[10][11].

CAD-ASC remains committed to advocating for these changes to create a more inclusive and equitable society for Deaf and Deaf-Blind Canadians. We call on the government and relevant stakeholders to take immediate action to address these critical issues.

Reviewed by the CAD-ASC board on April 6, 2025.

#### References

- [1] [Canadian Association of the Deaf](#)
- [2] [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | OHCHR](#)
- [3] [Undue hardship | Ontario Human Rights Commission](#)
- [4] [National Fire Code of Canada 2020](#)
- [5] [National Building Code of Canada 2020](#)
- [6] [Blind, Deaf or Disabled - Government of New Brunswick](#)
- [7] [Employment - Accessibility Standards Canada](#)
- [8] [NAD - National Association of the Deaf](#)
- [9] [Accessible Affordable Housing Honored with National Award](#)
- [10] [The Urgent Need for Affordable Housing for Canadians Who Are Deafblind](#)
- [11] [Ontario's best residential services for the deafblind](#)