

Prime Timer Focus

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Reaction to Landmark Canadian Transportation Agency Decision: Disabled Canadians Jubilant to Have Transport Barrier Removed

© Council of Canadians with Disabilities, January 10, 2008.

On January 10, 2008 the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) released a landmark decision concerning the right of individuals with disabilities to travel by air without having to pay for a second seat, for an attendant or other use, to accommodate their disability. In a historic decision in the “One Person, One Fare” case, the agency has recognized the right of these individuals to have access to a second seat when traveling by air in Canada without having to pay a second fare.

“Canadians with disabilities are celebrating today,” said Pat Danforth, Chairperson of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities Transportation Committee. Joanne Neubauer, one of the principal complainants in the case, agreed. “We hope that this decision sends a strong message to all transportation carriers,” she said. “Access is the rule.”

The CTA decision acknowledged the importance of a number of established human rights principles underlying the arguments of the complainants in the case, noting that these principles dictate that persons with disabilities have the same rights as others to full participation in all aspects of society and that equal access to transportation is critical to their exercise of that right.

“The Canadian Transportation Agency recognized the fundamental soundness of our arguments, which have a strong foundation in existing human rights jurisprudence,” said David Baker of bakerlaw, legal counsel for the complainants in the case. “While the number of people who will benefit and the actual cost to the airlines are larger than in any previous case, the principles applied by the Agency in its decision were clearly established by the Supreme Court of Canada in its March 2007 CCD v. VIA Rail decision,” said David Baker.

Disabled Canadians said the decision had the potential to make an enormous difference in their lives. “This is about independence,” said Sandra Carpenter of the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto. “It’s about our ability to be part of Canadian society and to have barriers to our participation removed.”

The decision was many years in coming – the late Eric Norman, Joanne

Neubauer, and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities filed the original complaint with the CTA in 2002, seeking to establish a situation of equality for passengers with disabilities who travel with attendants.

For many years, Canadians with disabilities traveling by train, bus or marine service have been permitted to use a second seat without cost when one was required. But airlines such as Air Canada, Westjet, and Jazz have not been bound to obey this policy, meaning that many Canadians with disabilities have been forced to effectively pay double what others pay to fly.

Now that all seems set to change.

“We have been looking for some good news in the transport industry for some time,” said Claredon Robicheau, a member of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) Transport Committee. “This decision gives us enormous hope that we are once again moving to build an accessible and inclusive Canada.”

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CHS Releases Position Paper on Discrimination and Audism to Coincide with International Day of Disabled Persons

© *Canadian Hearing Society Press Release, December 3rd 2007.*

Recently, the Canadian Hearing Society released its position paper on Discrimination and Audism. "Like people with any disability, Canadians who are Deaf or have a form of hearing loss continue to experience discrimination," said Gary Malkowski, CHS Special Advisor to the President, Public Affairs. "It is happening not only in the workplace but even when accessing vital services the rest of us take for granted such as education, health care, and housing."

The position paper, developed as a tool to educate on issues of discrimination as they relate to culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing Canadians, discusses specifically the forms of discrimination rooted in "audism". A key term often unfamiliar or misunderstood, audism is defined as the notion that a person's superiority is rooted in their ability to hear and speak.

The growing prevalence of hearing loss in Canada makes this form of discrimination an increasing concern. Currently, the average age in Canada is 39 years; by 2030 it will be 45 years. Couple this with statistics that show hearing loss as the third most prevalent chronic condition in older adults and the most widespread disability, it is a disability poised to climb dramatically in numbers as our population ages.

"Our vision is to work towards ensuring that attitudes change and barriers come down," said Kelly Duffin, CHS President and CEO. "That includes some of the more subtle forms of discrimination, for instance, an apartment is given to someone else because a landlord is reluctant to rent to someone who is Deaf or a person with a hearing loss not hired for a job because of 'safety concerns'. It happens and it's unfair. Our intention is that this paper will serve as an essential reference for government, employers, and media to move us closer to a society where all people are respected and included."

Since 1940, The Canadian Hearing Society has been the leading provider of services, products, and information that remove barriers to communication, advance hearing health, and promote equity for people who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing.

Read the full position paper at:

<http://www.chs.ca/info/publicaffairs/pdf/CHSPositionOnDiscrimination.pdf>.

Backgrounder

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) was incorporated in 1940 to provide services, products and information to culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing people and to educate the hearing public. CHS is governed by a

board of directors, the majority of whom are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing. The organization is funded by government, internal revenue generation including fundraising, and the United Way.

Unique in North America, CHS offers a complete roster of essential services under one roof through 27 offices including sign language interpreting to bridge the gap between Deaf and hearing people; one-on-one language development for deaf children using play as the medium of learning; employment services; sign language instruction; speechreading training; and, the most complete range of communication devices that assist and augment communication including TTYs (text telephones), visual smoke detectors, baby monitors and alarm clocks.

Terminology:

Language is a powerful tool – it both shapes and is shaped by ideas, perceptions and attitudes. And it's these very attitudes that can pose the most difficult barriers for people who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing. The following terms describe people, their language of communication and self-identification. As an organization which serves these communities and educates the hearing public, we avoid using terms such as "hearing impaired" or "normal or abnormal hearing" or colloquialisms such as "falling on deaf ears."

Oral deaf: This term is generally used to describe individuals with a severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no residual hearing. Some deaf people use sign language such as American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) to communicate. Others use speech to communicate, using their residual hearing and hearing aids, communication devices or cochlear implants, and lipreading or speechreading.

Culturally Deaf: This term refers to individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture, and community of Deaf people, based on sign language. Deaf culture, indicated by a capital "D," does not perceive hearing loss and deafness as a disability, but as the basis of a distinct cultural group. Culturally Deaf people may also use speech reading, gesturing, spoken language, and written English to communicate with people who do not sign.

Deafened: This term describes individuals who grow up hearing or hard of hearing and, either suddenly or gradually, experience a profound hearing loss. Deafened adults usually use speech with visual cues such as captioning or computerized note-taking, speech reading or sign language.

Hard of Hearing: This term is generally used to describe individuals whose hearing loss ranges from mild to severe, and occasionally profound. Hard of hearing people use speech and residual hearing to communicate, supplemented by communication strategies that may include speechreading, hearing aids, sign

language and communication devices. The term “person with hearing loss” is increasingly used and preferred by this constituency.

Share Your Experiences and Learn to Effectively Tell Your Story

The Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO) will host workshops and public meetings this winter. They are calling on Ethnocultural and/or racialized persons with Disabilities to get together to share knowledge and experience.

Are you wanting to increase your ability to make contributions to your community? Have you felt excluded/left out because of your disability and Culture, Race, Religion and/or gender?

Please contact ERDCO if you are interested in participating in this workshop. Attendant and ASL services will be provided. They will be soon be circulating information on dates and locations of upcoming events. Call ERDCO 416-657-2211 or email them at erdco_ca@yahoo.ca for more information. This project is funded by the Access, Equity and Human Rights grants program, City of Toronto.

Sex, Wheels & Relationships!

This is a forum for members to meet and learn, this event enables consumers, their partners, health care professionals and researchers to share their experiences and learn from the experts. Morning sessions are particularly geared toward our members working in health care, while the afternoon provides an opportunity for those living with SCI or related disabilities, to network and gain the benefit of lived experience from their peers. Come for the morning, the afternoon, or stay all day!

This forum is **free** to all CPA Ontario members. Non-members pay \$10 for the forum for entry and receive a full year's membership.

Morning Agenda: Spotlight on Health Care, Disability and Sexuality

8:30 to 9:15 Registration (Refreshments available and Exhibitor Booths open)

9:15 to 12:00 Professionals in their field will speak on topics like The Psychological Effect of Disability on Relationships; Pregnancy and Parenting with a Disability, and Erectile Dysfunction.

12:00 to 1:15 Buffet lunch, exhibitor booths, and registration for afternoon sessions

1:15 Keynote Address: Lisa Bendall, Author

Lisa Bendall has professional expertise in disability issues. She is the former longtime managing editor of Abilities, Canada's disability magazine. Her books, *After Disability: A Guide to Getting on with Life* and *Raising a Kid with Special Needs: The Complete Canadian Guide*, give practical, hopeful advice on living with a disability. Lisa has made appearances as an expert in this field. Lisa and her husband have been married for 12 years and have an 8-year-old daughter.

Afternoon Agenda: Peer to Peer Conversation

2:00 to 3:45 Roundtable Discussions

3:45 to 4:30 Social - prize giveaways, exhibitor booths

SPACE IS LIMITED – Sign up today! Call Ann Kennedy at (416) 422-5644, x249 or email to memberforumsvp@cpaont.org.

Loves Me, Loves Me Not - Domestic Violence in LGBT Communities

Join community activists and professionals from the Coalition Against Same Sex Partner Abuse (CASSPA) as we launch our new pamphlets and discuss the need for domestic violence services.

Speakers include Nicole Brown, Jesmon Mendoza, Yasmeen Persaud, Fran Odette, Patricia Durish, Jane Walsh, Helen Kennedy and Howard Shulman.

Presenter organizations include the Toronto Police Services, Domestic Violence Division, Children's Aid Society, Domestic Violence Team and Egale Canada.

The event will take place **Tuesday February 12, 2008**: Reception at 6:30 p.m. and Presentation at 7:00 p.m. at the 519 Church Street Community Centre. All are welcome!

Abuse in Same-Sex Relationships

Abuse in same-sex relationships is a serious problem within lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans gendered communities. Same-sex partner abuse is often ignored, minimized or misunderstood by families, friends, communities and service providers, but it is a reality.

What is an abusive intimate relationship?

Abuse and battering are words that describe a pattern of behaviors used to intimidate, isolate, dominate and maintain power and control over someone. It can feel confusing. In some cases, there may be an ongoing pattern of abuse. In other cases, abuse may happen less often.

Abuse may take many forms and can be physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, spiritual and/or financial.

Examples of Abusive Behavior:

She/He...

- tells you that they love you and support you, but constantly puts you down. You feel crazy.
- keeps you from seeing your friends or family.
- threatens to 'out' you or have you deported.
- says you're confused because you identify as bi-sexual.
- denies or makes fun of your gender identity.
- insults your racial, ethnic, religious and/or class background.
- is extremely jealous and possessive, accuses you of cheating.
- threatens, slaps, shoves, punches, or restrains you against your will.
- forces you to drink or take drugs.
- forces you to have sex or unprotected sex; sexually assaults you.
- destroys your personal belongings or hurts your pet.
- doesn't respect your boundaries and ignores your safe words in your relationship.
- keeps promising to change but the abuse happens again.

What can I do if I think I'm being abused?

- Conflict and abuse can feel confusing when it's happening. Ask yourself: am I being physically, sexually or emotionally abused, controlled or threatened? Am I anxious and stressed about how my partner treats me? Do I feel isolated, afraid or hopeless? If you said 'yes' to any of these, it's important to get some perspective about what's happening.
- Try to find at least one person you can talk to about what is going on - a friend, family member or counselor. This may give you perspective, and help you make decisions about what to do. Remember that the abuse is NOT your fault.

- Making the decision about staying or leaving may feel difficult. You may not want to leave or feel you can't. Or leaving the situation temporarily or permanently may be options. While deciding what to do, ask yourself what you can do to feel safer and have more options such as: connecting with others and reducing your isolation, increasing your financial independence, and setting stronger boundaries and limits with your partner.
- You might want to make a plan for leaving and work towards that over time doing some of the things suggested above.
- Create a safety plan to reduce the risks or harm. Think about what you (and your children) need to be as safe as possible—while in the relationship or if you leave.
- Put emergency money, keys and important documents in a safe place (with a friend or neighbour) in case you need to leave quickly.
- If you decide to leave, find a place where you can feel safe and your partner will not find you (family or friend's home, shelter/transition house). LGBT people face numerous challenges in accessing safe housing/shelter. This may be especially true if you also happen to have a disability.
- Try to vary your routine so your partner won't be able to find you. Because LGBT communities are small, not to mention the disability community in, and of, itself, you have a greater risk of running into your partner at social events. If you end up in situations together, try to set boundaries for yourself and look to friends and family for support.
- If you are in immediate danger, call the police. Remember, physical and sexual assault are against the law. You have legal rights to protection. If these rights are ignored by the police, find an advocate to help get you what you need.

What can I do if I think I'm being abusive?

Ask yourself: Am I threatening my partner? Am I trying to punish or blame my partner for my actions? Am I constantly lashing out at them? Do I feel like hurting my partner or myself?

Answering yes to any of these means it's time to think about your actions, take responsibility and stop hurting your partner. Leave the situation or relationship if necessary to keep your partner safe. Call on friends, family and/or a counselor to help you change your behaviours.

Responding as a Community

Stopping same-sex partner abuse requires a community response. Here are some ideas:

- Talk openly about abuse in same-sex relationships. Support friends to stay connected to one another and help to break isolation.
- Help to find information and resources if friends are abused or abusive.
- Abuse happens in all our communities. Don't support harmful stereotypes that say some communities are more likely to have violent relationships. For example, people of colour; Aboriginal people; 'the bar crowd'; butch/female couples; trans and bisexual communities.

Resources:

Springtide Resources

416-968-3422

www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/same-sex_partner_abuse.html

Safe Choices

Vancouver, British Columbia

604-633-2506

OR visit the following additional websites:

www.endingviolence.org

www.lgtbcentrevancouver.org

www.nwnetwork.org

www.the519.org

www.cwhn.ca/network-reseau/3-4/3-4pg2.html

www.lgca.ca

www.caw.ca/whatwedo/pride/healthy_lgbt.asp

www.camh.net/Publications/Cross_Currents/Winter_2004-05doublejeopardy_crcu0405.html

Peer Support Program Update

Toonie Movie Night:

This is CILT's latest Peer Support activity. Toonie Movie Night will begin in February, and will occur bi-monthly on a "pilot" basis. In other words, we will see how popular this new activity becomes before deciding whether or not it will be a permanent peer support activity. If attendance is on the higher side for the first few events, then Toonie Movie Night will continue. If not, then as with the Coffee Club, it will be discontinued.

A flyer/brochure containing details of the first event will be sent out to all peer support members shortly. Stay tuned for details!

Mid Winter Gathering:

The Prime Timers are getting together with PDN members for their annual "Mid Winter Gathering" on Saturday February 23rd. Join us for an afternoon of fun and refreshments. Stay tuned for details.

Gateway to Screening– Project Update:

The analysis of all of the data collected at the five focus groups has been completed. We are now entering the analysis into the computer and a report on the project outcomes should be finalized toward the end of February; at which time, a special launch of the report will take place. Stay tuned for current project updates.

Peer Support Workshops:

In the upcoming months, CILT will be hosting a number of peer support workshops on topics including self esteem, how to cope in an unhealthy relationship, body image, and more. You will be notified by mail when a workshop is coming up.