

CHS calls for qualifications and standards for professional sign language interpreters

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Toronto, ON (December 12, 2013) – The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) calls for qualifications and standards for professional sign language interpreters for effective communication between Deaf and hearing communities in light of the current situation reported in South Africa of the hiring of an unqualified interpreter at Nelson Mandela’s memorial.

“While we acknowledge there is a shortage of qualified interpreters in Canada, it is not acceptable for organizations to hire unqualified interpreters. Organizations should provide screened, trained professional interpreters in all interactions between Deaf and hearing people,” said Chris Kenopic, President and CEO, Canadian Hearing Society.

“It’s time to stop the practice of hiring unqualified interpreters,” Kenopic added. “It’s time for all public and private sector organizations to enforce standards and best practices for interpreting. It is important that interpreters have the appropriate credentials because we need to ensure all people have equal access to communication. Qualified interpreters provide that.”

CHS has for many years advocated for the provision of high quality interpreting services used in educational, community, medical and legal proceedings. When qualified interpreters are not available for assignments, Deaf and hard of hearing people experience unequal treatment that has potentially life-threatening or economic consequences.

“Using unqualified interpreters such as the one used at Nelson Mandela’s memorial service is disrespectful and an insult to the Deaf community,” said Gary Malkowski, Special Advisor to the President, Public Affairs, CHS. “Unfortunately, interpreters without credentials are being hired in Ontario. We are seeing more and more organizations hiring for lower costs which means they are often hiring unqualified interpreters.”

CHS recommends using professionally trained and screened sign language interpreters for communication in public proceedings or situations. In Canada, Interpreters are certified by AVLIC (Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada), which awards a Certificate of Interpretation (COI), the highest level of screening in the country. There are also a number of employer screening tools. In Ontario interpreters who are registered with CHS’ Ontario

Interpreting Service either hold their COI or have undergone a skills screening and a knowledge and attitude interview.

<http://www.chs.ca/news-releases>