

The Hon. John Manley  
Minister of Finance and Deputy Minister  
L'Esplanade Laurier, 140 O'Connor St.  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G5

9 October 2002

Dear Mr. Manley;

As President of the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD), I would like to add the voices of Canada's 310,000 linguistically-culturally Deaf citizens to those of MP Wendy Lill and many others who oppose the changes you wish to make to the Disability Tax Credit.

You are most likely unaware of the real rationale for the DTC, as it was created in its present format in the middle-late 1980s. It was never intended to compensate disabled people for their disabilities. It was intended to compensate them for the fact that *Canadian society is not accessible for people who have disabilities*.

This is a huge difference.

The principle of the DTC is that Canadian society must strive to achieve full accessibility and inclusion for all of its citizens, and that those who find barriers in their way should be compensated until those barriers are removed. The DTC is an *incentive* for governments at all levels, regulatory agencies, crown corporations, and public institutions to strive towards the goal of full accessibility. Once full accessibility is achieved, the DTC can be eliminated altogether. As you know very well, Canada is still far from achieving that goal. Hence, people with disabilities must continue to be compensated fairly for our society's *lack of accessibility and equality*.

Unfortunately, your government appears intent upon pursuing the wrong interpretation of the DTC, i.e., as compensation for disability itself. This has set you on the never-ending treadmill of trying to define and re-define disabilities, and trying to set parameters that will finesse people with genuine disabilities out of eligibility to receive the DTC. Your latest maneuvers in this direction, namely, the re-definition of "eating" and "dressing", are clear evidence of this erroneous approach.

Our constituency of Deaf persons have also found themselves subjected to this approach, forced to deal with ridiculous and inaccurate "definitions" of deafness based on whether or not we can "hear so as to understand, a conversation with a familiar person in a quiet setting". Does anyone spend most of their time in conversation with "a familiar person in a quiet setting"? If you are deaf, aren't *all* settings "quiet settings"? The definition also uses a topsy-turvy interpretation of lipreading — skill in lipreading is taken as proof of deafness, instead of as proof of an ability to "function in everyday situations". The CAD has been in negotiations with Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

representatives for over a year with respect to improving the appropriateness of DTC questionnaires relating to deafness, and we can only marvel at the lengths to which they go in torturing the nuances of a definition that has nothing to do with the original purpose of the DTC in the first place.

We urge you to put aside your efforts to fine-tune definitions of “disability” and instead focus upon the real goal of the Disability Tax Credit, by dedicating yourself and your government to the goal of making Canadian society accessible and equal to all persons of all disabilities. Achieve that goal, and you will never again need to bother adjusting the DTC, because it will no longer be necessary.

Sincerely,

Chris Kenopic  
President

cc: Wendy Lill, MP  
Council of Canadians with Disabilities