



Ontario Association of the Deaf

Working together to ensure a better future for Deaf Ontarians.

PRESS RELEASE

January 15, 2012

For Immediate Release

Video Relay Service
Toronto, Ontario

A Video Relay Service (VRS), is a video telecommunication service that allows Deaf, Deafened, Hard-of-Hearing and speech-impaired individuals to communicate over video telephones and similar technologies with hearing people in real-time, via a Sign Language interpreter, such as American Sign Language (ASL)

For Deaf Ontarians, it is essential that we have access to VRS as it enhances our ability to communicate and work with hearing people in Ontario, Canada and internationally. Other countries have had established VRS systems for several years. For example, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the regulatory body for VRS in the United States. But a system is not yet available in Canada.

On behalf of Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD), we would like to thank the people who are advocating for VRS through a rally in Toronto. We acknowledge the efforts of B.C. and Alberta's Deaf community as they have participated in a trial with TELUS and an American VRS company. In this trial, individuals were supplied with videophones and VRS services and the number of phone calls were monitored and documented. We must support all efforts throughout Canada and ensure the results are shared with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) once the trial expires on January 15, 2012.

Once TELUS sends the B.C and Alberta trial results to the CRTC, the VRS trial will once again end until 2013 when a decision will be made by the CRTC as to whether implementation of the VRS system will occur in Canada.

Since January 2011, OAD has been participating in an Advisory Committee discussing the issues of a VRS implementation in Canada. Along with OAD, other contributors in this VRS Feasibility Study are Mission Consulting, Bell Canada, Canadian Association of the Deaf, Canadian Hearing Society, and Centre québécois de la déficience auditive. The committee focuses on the important items to be included in a CRTC's VRS regulation, such as challenges with fees, funding, hours, quality, types of providers, program governance and management, acquisition, interpreters and implementation. A summary of recommendations

will be included for bi-language English/ASL and French/ Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ). The report will be completed by the end of February 2012. For your information, the CRTC approved Bell Canada's use of deferral account funds for the VRS Feasibility Study. We sincerely hope that the CRTC will agree with our request that VRS be made available across Canada to ASL and LSQ signers, as soon as possible.

OAD is Canada's oldest Deaf non-profit consumer organization. Our mission is "Working together to ensure a better future for Deaf Ontarians". We work for the purpose of ensuring equality and protecting the rights of Deaf Ontarians. OAD was founded in 1886 by two Deaf instructors from the Belleville Institution for the Deaf, now known as Sir James Whitney. OAD depends on both public donations and government funding for our operations.

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