

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF

# Disability Studies

Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association · Association Canadienne des Études sur l'Incapacité

*Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*

**Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association  
Association Canadienne des Études sur le Handicap**

**Hosted by The University of Waterloo**

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## **Commentary: Disservice to Society: A Transnational Analysis of the Canadian Hearing Services**

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### **Abstract**

This paper expresses a growing sentiment the author felt as an employee of Canadian Hearing Services, one that is only implied in the Deaf Citizens petition. Namely, that the current operation of CHS is contributing to a disconnect from the Ontario and Canadian deaf communities, but it also signifies a disconnect from something bigger—what the author calls the global deaf network or what Murray (2007) calls “the transnational Deaf public sphere” (p.4)—and therefore the actions taking place at CHS reverberate beyond provincial and national borders. In applying a transnational analysis, the author explores the connections and linkages between CHS and a deaf network that exists globally, which includes CHS’ past participation in large international deaf events and the role of CHS offices in bringing together people who have unique and important experiences engaging with global deaf spaces and networks, and consider if the changes recently implemented at CHS signify an organizational withdrawal from these global spaces and networks. While this discussion only scratches the surface of possible connections linking CHS to a global deaf network, the author aims to add their voice to those calling on CHS to rebuild bridges that have previously linked the organization with deaf networks at local as well as global levels.

**Keywords: deaf communities, global deaf network, medical model, Canadian Hearing Services**

## **Introduction**

The Canadian Hearing Services (CHS), formerly known as the Canadian Hearing Society, is a non-profit that provides services and supports to deaf and hard of hearing people across various locations in Ontario. Services available at CHS include audiology, employment supports, literacy classes, American Sign Language classes, interpreter services and training, device sales, and more. The current “mission”, as listed on the CHS website, is to “be the leading organization delivering professional services and products that empower Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians to overcome barriers to participation” (Canadian Hearing Services, 2021).

When CHS was founded in 1940—then called the National Society of the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing (NSD&HH)—the organization focused on providing employment-related supports to deaf and hard of hearing Ontarians (Carbin, 1996). This narrow focus on employment led to “conflict” between the NSD&HH and leading organizations in the deaf community, such as the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) and the Ontario Association of the Deaf (OAD) (Roots, 2003, p. 80; Carbin, 1996). At the time both the CAD and the OAD were concerned with addressing deficiencies in deaf education; the NSD&HH did not share this concern and instead “seemed to support the personnel and procedures” in place in Ontario’s only school for the deaf (Carbin, 1996, p. 192). The disagreement around which issues to prioritize reflected a wide gap between the aims and objectives of the NSD&HH and those of the deaf community. Roots (2003) underscores this gap in his description of the NSD&HH, in its early years, as “a hearing-controlled Ontario service agency less interested in championing Deaf concerns than in grabbing government funding for Deaf employment services” (p. 80). Similar claims are being made today as the relationship between CHS and the deaf community has become increasingly strained in recent years.

In particular, feelings of distrust and alienation already present in the Ontario deaf community have been amplified following two announcements made by CHS in January 2020. These include the termination of Gary Malkowski, one of the senior deaf staff employed by CHS, and the rebrand, which involved a name and logo change. These announcements, as is outlined below, are part of a larger trend that has been identified at CHS; specifically, that deafness has become increasingly and restrictively viewed as a medical and audiological concern. A group called ‘Deaf Citizens’ has mobilized in response to these recent changes, talking back at decision-makers at CHS and raising questions about the organization’s position in relation to the deaf community.<sup>1</sup> The main components of the Deaf Citizens response include an online petition available in American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), English, and French, as well as a list of open letters submitted from deaf organizations at municipal, provincial, and national levels. Together the petition and open letters bring to light a shift—a repositioning—that has taken place at CHS. In its current position, according to the Deaf Citizens petition, CHS “no longer represents”, “speak[s] for”, or is “an ally of the Deaf Community” (Deaf Citizens, n.d.).

A central concern expressed by the petitioners is that “CHS has dismembered itself from the Deaf Community” (Deaf Citizens, n.d.).<sup>2</sup> This assessment resonates with my experience as a CHS employee. I worked at CHS from 2018 until 2020, first as an Employment Consultant and later as a Literacy Instructor. As a Child of Deaf Adults (Coda), I applied to CHS in search of a job as well as a way to connect with the deaf community in Ontario, having recently moved to the province.<sup>3</sup> My time as an employee has convinced me that more people need to be made aware of what is going on inside CHS. This article endeavours to do just that, as well as remind those in decision-making positions at CHS that their actions have global repercussions.

In this paper, I express a growing sentiment I felt as an employee of CHS, one that is only implied in the Deaf Citizens petition; that the current operation of CHS is contributing to a disconnect from the Ontario and Canadian deaf communities, but it also signifies a disconnect from something bigger—what I call the global deaf network or what Murray (2007) calls “the transnational Deaf public sphere” (p.4)—and therefore the actions taking place at CHS reverberate beyond provincial and national borders.<sup>4</sup> In applying a transnational analysis, I explore the connections and linkages between CHS and a deaf network that exists globally, which includes CHS’ past participation in large international deaf events and the role of CHS offices in bringing together people who have unique and important experiences engaging with global deaf spaces and networks, and consider if the changes recently implemented at CHS signify an organizational withdrawal from these global spaces and networks. While this discussion only scratches the surface of possible connections linking CHS to a global deaf network, I aim to add my voice to those calling on CHS to rebuild bridges that have previously linked the organization with deaf networks at local as well as global levels.

In the first section, I describe some of the issues that have emerged at CHS in recent years, as outlined on the Deaf Citizens website. Looking at the examples provided in the petition and open letters, I explore what it is about the recent changes implemented at CHS that signifies a disconnect from the Ontario and Canadian deaf communities. In the next section, I apply a transnational analysis to explore ways CHS has been linked to the global deaf network in the past. In the third section, I return to the arguments made in the Deaf Citizens petition and suggest that recent actions administered at CHS signify a withdrawal from the global deaf network. I conclude by asking what the implications of this global separation might be. This analysis

exposes the potentially far-reaching consequences of the changes being made by CHS here in Ontario.

### **CHS separates from the deaf community**

The petition and open letters presented on the Deaf Citizens website help make visible a shift that has taken place at CHS, one that has compromised the organization's previous position within or alongside the deaf community. Across the Deaf Citizens website, the various examples provided as evidence of this shift involve announcements and patterns that have become visible at CHS following the appointment of the current CEO in 2015. Two examples repeatedly discussed in the petition and open letters include the rebrand and the dismissal of Gary Malkowski. The petition lists four other examples which can be summarized as: a decline in the numbers of deaf staff; low representation of deaf people on the board; increasing reliance on a medical model of deafness; and the removal of a "membership" system where community members can keep abreast of CHS updates and news (Deaf Citizens, n.d.). Below I sketch out what it is about some of these key changes that signify a separation between CHS and the deaf community.

One of the central issues discussed across the Deaf Citizens website involves the increasing presence of a view of deaf people and deafness at CHS that is incompatible with those of the deaf community. According to the Deaf Citizens petition, CHS has become increasingly focused on "medical aspects of Deafness" (Deaf Citizens, n.d.). In other words, a medical model of deafness has become increasingly discernible at CHS. Under a medical model, deafness is viewed as primarily an individual and audiological deficiency. Padden and Humphries (1988), in their early discussion of deaf culture in the American deaf community, describe the existence of a "different center" in which the medicalized body is not the main focus (p. 42). Ladd (2003)

uses the term “culturo-linguistic model” to describe this different orientation to deafness, under which the languages, norms, and values shared by deaf people become important (p. 15). Central to a culturo-linguistic model is the view that deaf people make up a linguistic community that shares a “collective culture” (Ladd, 2003, p. 17).

My two years as a CHS employee provided me with a glimpse into an organization with a long history working to address the needs of deaf people in Ontario as part of a linguistic and cultural community. Significant examples include CHS’ past involvement in movements toward sign language recognition and sign language use in education led by the Ontario deaf community in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Nonetheless, as powerfully articulated in the open letter from the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD), the notion that deaf people form a “collective community” and culture is “something the current CHS at the highest levels of its operations seems not to understand or support” (Cripps & Mitchell, 2020).

Across the Deaf Citizens website, there are several examples given as proof that a medical model has taken hold at CHS, including the rebrand. The rebrand involved a name change, which turned the Canadian Hearing Society into the Canadian Hearing Services, and a new logo that consists of concentric squares. The name change coupled with the new logo—an image that when signed in ASL as square shapes “placed over [the] ear” translates as a “heavily medical viewpoint on deafness” (Robinson et al., 2020)—represent the most recent and obvious manifestation of a medical model taking hold at CHS. The petitioners argue that, as a direct outcome of the increased focus on audiological and medical concerns, “CHS has shifted from its role as a major voice representing Deaf Communities to become mainly a provider of audiological services” (Deaf Citizens, n.d.).

Another important example listed on the Deaf Citizens website as evidence of both an increasing reliance on a medical model and an overall shift away from the deaf community includes a pattern identified and described as a consistent reduction in deaf staff employed by CHS. Many of the open letters point to news of Malkowski's termination as evidence of this pattern. For instance, as the open letter from the CAD explains, Malkowski's termination "is consistent with what appears to the public to be a concerted strategy to drive Deaf employees out of the very organization that boasts of 'empowering' them. Scores of fine Deaf employees have evaporated from the agency over the past few years" (Vlug, 2020). There are no numbers provided on the Deaf Citizens website as a measurement of this pattern; however, that the issues of employment and dwindling numbers of deaf staff are described by most, if not all, the open letters demonstrates that many in the community feel that this pattern is indeed evident at CHS and that it will adversely impact the operation of the organization.

As the letter from the CCSD argues, by reducing the numbers of deaf employees CHS is failing to address an urgent need of the community, specifically "low rate[s] of employment", which raises questions about CHS' commitment to addressing concerns that are not audiological in nature (Cripps & Mitchell, 2020). Moreover, as many of the open letters attest, the very potential for the organization to operate in ways that address the needs of deaf people beyond any sort of audiological concern has been jeopardized. Jankowski (1997) suggests that deaf people have knowledge that, when placed in decision-making positions, can help to ensure programs benefit the community and respond to the "communication needs of the Deaf community" (p. 33). Similarly, Enns et al (2018), looking at the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf, explain that the high involvement of the deaf community in the development of services guaranteed the provision of services according to the cultural and linguistic needs of the



community. With few deaf staff in senior management and dwindling numbers of staff across the organization, the potential for CHS to ensure services are linguistically and culturally relevant, such as the provision of all services in ASL or LSQ (not only providing services through interpretation), is highly questionable.

At CHS, according to the petition description, the current CEO was appointed in 2015 to address “financial and organizational challenges” despite a lack of “knowledge of sign language or Deaf Communities” (Deaf Citizens, n.d.). That the cultural knowledges and experiences of deaf people have been devalued at CHS is powerfully portrayed in one of the main images on the Deaf Citizens website. In this image, a bridge formerly connecting a CHS office (presumably head office) with land has been shattered, left standing on the patch of land are deaf people who hold resumes that explicitly list “lived experience” (Carodoodles, 2020a). The devaluation of lived experience can work to legitimize the authority of hearing people over deaf spaces and the lives of deaf people. For instance, Jankowski, discussing the Deaf President Now protest that took place at Gallaudet University in 1988 following the appointment of a hearing president above two other deaf candidates, suggests that the ““qualification[s]”” valued in the search for a new president were set according to the hearing world, and things such as lived experience or knowledge of deaf culture were deemed less important (1997, p. 117). The devaluation of the experiences and community affiliation of deaf employees is deeply harmful as it restricts the ability for deaf people to take “ownership of their community”, which, according to Jankowski, has been an important technique to support the maintenance and preservation of the deaf community (1997, p. 146).

In 2017 CHS launched a new three-year strategic plan and while no mention was made of addressing the controversial relationship with the deaf community described in this section, one

of the main goals involved the expansion of the organization's presence across the country (Canadian Hearing Society, n.d.). Even as CHS aims to expand nationally the organization is already connected to and interacting with a network that extends globally, albeit in ways the current management does not seem to value.

### **Global connections at CHS**

In this section, I switch gears to trace some of the linkages that exist between CHS and a global deaf network, and by doing so I hope to start a conversation that more thoroughly examines and calls attention to the possibly far-reaching impacts of changes materializing at CHS. I outline several ways CHS has been linked to the global deaf network, focusing specifically on CHS' participation in large international deaf events and the multitude of experiences engaging with this network that many staff and clients bring to CHS office spaces. However, the picture of global connectedness stemming from CHS sketched below is partial and incomplete, and further research that examines and uncovers other connections between CHS, and similar service providers, and the global deaf network is needed. Before charting some of the connections that link CHS to a larger transnational deaf public sphere, it is necessary to outline what this sphere looks like and is made up of.

The notion of a deaf community linked globally has been taken up by scholars working in fields such as Deaf Studies and Anthropology, where they have described the spaces, events, and experiences that connect deaf people across physical distances. Murray (2007), for example, sketches the transnational character of the lives of deaf Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He traces a complex and shifting transnational deaf public sphere, highly dependent upon the flow of bodies and ideas through such methods as "print publications, international meetings, and individual travel" (Murray, 2007, p. 46). According to Murray, such

early international interactions between deaf people gave those involved an opportunity to share “ideas on living as Deaf people they could not receive from interactions with auditory citizens of their own nations” (2007, p. 43). Emery (2015) explores the idea of a “Deaf diaspora” and the “routes” that connect deaf people even when geographically dispersed around the world, as well as carry a sense of connectedness (p. 193). Important spaces these routes often form around include “megaevents”, such as “the quadrennial Deaflympics and world congresses of the World Federation of the Deaf,” which bring together large international deaf audiences (Haualand, Solvang, Breivik, 2015, p. 47). In their research analyzing deaf megaevents in the early 2000s, Haualand, Solvang, and Breivik (2015) found that deaf megaevents “were, in spite of their limited temporality and transience, tangible manifestations of a deaf community that transcended national borders” (p. 48). Such global deaf spaces also exist online in a digital environment (Kurz & Cuculick, 2015; Valentine & Skeleton, 2008).

The Deaf Citizens petition can help us visualize an element fundamental to the idea that a deaf network or community extends globally alluded to above, and that is the idea of “deaf universalism”, which can be defined as “a (belief in a) deep connection that is felt between deaf people around the globe, grounded in experiential ways of being in the world as deaf people” (Kusters & Friedner, 2015, p. x). The petition speaks to an audience not bound by provincial or national borders, as suggested in the notion of a deaf citizenry and in one of the main images on the website where an image of the earth is framed by the words “ONE WORLD” (Carodoodles, 2020b). The notion of a deaf ‘one world’ does not refer to an actual deaf planet, but rather the idea of “Deaf globalism—that is, that Deaf people share profound global commonalities” (Ladd, 2015, p. 275). However, Kusters & Friedner (2015) caution that a focus on “likeness and affiliation” can mask “differences” among deaf people around the world, such as “nationality,

ethnicity, class, mobility, educational levels, and...language, among other things” (p. x). While the imagery of a deaf ‘one world’ is utilized in the Deaf Citizens petition to garner support from a larger audience, the petition—which requires technology and the internet to utilize, is available in two sign languages but no other sign languages used by deaf people in Ontario, Canada, and internationally, and implies that the issues outlined will be relevant to deaf people in the same ways—might address most deaf persons in similar cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic context to the petition creators. It is therefore important to remember that there are a multitude of different ways of engaging in, and not engaging in, the global deaf network

The transnational deaf public sphere also offers a source of information and resistance (Murray, 2007). For instance, De Clerck (2007), in his research with Flemish deaf people, found that experiences engaging with deaf people and spaces in other parts of the world led to experiences of liberation, and Merricks (2015) found that youth who attended deaf megaevents often felt a new commitment to activism in their deaf communities upon returning home. As Murray points out, the transnational deaf public sphere provides a space where examples of past activism around the world can “be transmitted to other localities, to be adapted to and adopted by Deaf people experiencing similar mechanisms of control” (Murray, 2008, p. 105). The Deaf Citizens petition exemplifies this potential as it shares similarities with the Deaf President Now (DPN) protest. According to Christiansen and Barnartt (1995), one element of the DPN protest “that has been diffused is a version of the tactics” utilized, including a “list of demands, frequently four” (p. 208). The Deaf Citizens petition has similarly listed four main charges against CHS and there is direct overlap as both movements decry the minority presence of deaf board members. Moreover, as Christiansen and Barnartt argue, a core idea behind the DPN protest—“deaf control over deaf people—is at the root of all subsequent protests and is an

important part of what has been diffused” (1995, p. 208-209). This idea can be seen at the core of the Deaf Citizens response, as petitioners and letter writers call on the CEO and board of CHS to reconnect with the deaf community.

With this global network in mind, it is easiest to see how CHS has been linked to international deaf spaces and communities by looking at CHS’ past involvement in deaf megaevents, like the world congresses of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). The WFD “is a global organisation working to ensure equal rights for 70 million people around the globe” (World Federation of the Deaf, 2016). Congresses occur every four years and offer a large platform where participants can take part in “sharing information, networking, and exchanging strategies for advocacy” (Rosen, 2009, p. 379). CHS has participated in past congresses on numerous occasions, though here I focus on only two instances. In the 2019 world congress in Paris, Malkowski, as a representative of CHS, presented on a new CHS project aimed at assisting deaf and hard of hearing youth to transition to further education or to find employment following high school. In the 2007 world congress in Madrid, Malkowski, as a representative of CHS, delivered a presentation titled “Anti-Audism Policy in the Workplace: The Canadian Hearing Society Advocates for Zero Tolerance” (*Abstracts book of presentations and papers*, 2007, p. 60). Here CHS’ policy was given as an example of how to address workplace discrimination experienced by deaf employees.

So far, the examples of global connections linking CHS with the transnational deaf public sphere that I have provided focus on Malkowski’s involvement. As we will see in the next section, Malkowski is uniquely plugged-in to the global deaf network, which suggests that factors such as prior knowledge of the transnational deaf public sphere, as well as one’s position in the organization and education level influence one’s chance of being sent as a representative

of CHS to an event like world congress. Other research has shown that international deaf events are not equally accessible to all people. Haualand, Solvang, and Breivik found that those attending megaevents generally had “the money and the resources to travel and a strong drive or interest in networking and connecting with deaf people from other countries” (2015, p. 49). The global deaf network has also been exclusive along lines of race, religion, and gender (see Zaurov, 2015; Murray, 2007).

While participation in WFD congresses provides an opportunity for CHS staff to share news developing in Ontario as well as collect and bring back important information circulated at the event, for most staff at CHS, particularly those not in senior management positions, there is little likelihood of representing CHS at such an event. That being said, staff, board members, and clients may have attended megaevents independently from CHS, especially given that the 2003 world congress was hosted in Montreal. For instance, Len Mitchell joined the CHS board almost ten years after he was appointed vice-president of the WFD in 1999 (Gannon, 2011). And while it is likely many of the individuals who make up CHS offices have not attended a world congress, there is a multitude of other ways deaf people participate in the global deaf network. Deaf people who have travelled, follow vlogs with international conferences or sporting events, or otherwise interact with the global deaf network will likely have gained some sort of knowledge or experience from encountering international deaf spaces.

CHS offices serve as small pockets of connection within the global deaf network, where deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people are brought together, many of who are from other countries or have significant connections to deaf people and organizations internationally. Future research is necessary to examine the ways service providers like CHS are operating on both local and global levels, asking questions such as: How does one’s prior participation (as well as

different avenues of participation such as attending megaevents versus following international vlogs) in the transnational deaf public sphere influence one's work addressing barriers faced by deaf people in, say, Toronto? For example, how might knowledge of what Schmitt (2015) describes as "sign language arts festivals" (p. 19), which often constitute another sort of deaf megaevent, influence how an Employment Consultant assists a client who desires to become an artist? How might prior engagement with the global deaf network influence the experiences of clients accessing CHS services?

There is certainly room for future research to ask how transnational connections influence one's experience, as both staff and client, at CHS. However, even this limited discussion demonstrates that CHS is connected in various ways to the global deaf network. Therefore, it is necessary to ask if the separation between CHS and the Ontario and Canadian deaf communities identified in the Deaf Citizens website extends to the global deaf network in which CHS has been involved previously.

### **Global disconnect at CHS**

The creators of the Deaf Citizens petition insist that the changes taking place in Ontario have "implications for Deaf people across Canada" (Deaf Citizens, n.d.). While some of the letter writers imply that the changes announced at CHS will lead to repercussions felt on a global level, I make this explicit. I contend that recent actions and trends unfolding at CHS signify a withdrawal from the global deaf network.

That recent changes made at CHS indicate a separation between the organization and the transnational deaf public sphere is evident in the termination of Malkowski and the reduction in deaf staff decried in the Deaf Citizens petition. Many of the open letters mention Malkowski's international connections and, by doing so, suggest that actions taking place at CHS have global

implications. For example, the letter from the CAD powerfully expresses that Malkowski's termination will impact what is described as an "international Deaf community" (Vlug, 2020). In the letter, Malkowski is described as "a very special person in the world-wide Deaf community, not just the Canadian Deaf community" (Vlug, 2020). It is explained that Malkowski's special international position is largely due to his role as "the first Deaf elected politician, [who] inspire[d] many others around the world to run for public office" (Vlug, 2020). According to the CCSD, Malkowski "puts CHS on the map" (Cripps & Mitchell, 2020). Thinking of this map as a global one suggests that without Malkowski CHS loses a strong connection to a deaf world and is no longer operating in the same space.

Given Malkowski's unique international renown, his dismissal suggests that as an organization CHS is not interested in remaining connected to the global deaf network, but so too does the apparent dwindling of deaf staff and management at CHS. The reduction in numbers of deaf staff called out on the Deaf Citizens website involves a reduction in individuals who may bring their own experiences and knowledges of the global deaf network to their work within the organization. Furthermore, with very little deaf representation in senior management, it remains to be seen how and if CHS can continue to play a role at future events like world congress, in part because attending deaf megaevents on behalf of CHS is not a common experience for front-line staff. It also remains to be seen if CHS will continue to value participation in deaf megaevents, especially as the organization shifts away from recognizing clients and staff as members of the Ontario or Canadian deaf community, let alone a community that exists on a global scale.

The withdrawal from the global deaf network signified in Malkowski's termination mirrors or perhaps reinforces, a reprioritization on audiological issues occupying the



organization that must also be read as indicating a separation between CHS and the global deaf network. The positioning of deaf people “just as clients” at CHS (Vlug, 2020) is in stark contrast to the view of deafness promoted within the global deaf network. As Ladd points out, the visible and vibrant community formed around and found at deaf megaevents challenges the view of deaf people as “minimal, atomistic hearing-impaired selves propagated by [a] medical model” (2015, p. 284). The increasing prominence of a medical model may lead to CHS falling further off the map of the global deaf network. That is, an increased focus on audiological concerns at CHS may mean services become increasingly irrelevant to staff and clients here in Ontario just as it may mean the information, knowledge, expertise, services, and programs that are generated at CHS become increasingly irrelevant to an international deaf audience and deaf communities in other parts of the world.

### **Concluding thoughts: implications for the future, near and far**

As a result of the global separation taking place at CHS, the onus is placed on individual deaf staff to continue to remain connected to the global deaf network. There are still many staff at CHS who are striving to perform their work in ways that maintain or rebuild bridges broken by the current CHS administration. For example, in the literacy classroom instructors and learners share information circulating in the transnational deaf public sphere by watching vlogs made by deaf persons in other countries and discussing international policies related to sign language, often sharing one’s own experience having traveled or lived in other parts of the world. The focus on addressing audiological issues identified at the top of the organization is not shared by all staff, many of whom continue to prioritize dismantling educational, employment, and societal barriers impacting deaf Ontarians. Yet, an organizational withdrawal from provincial, national, and global deaf networks is transpiring as a result of the actions and

decisions of the current CHS administration and this leads to real consequences felt by deaf people and the deaf community. It appears particularly urgent at this point to examine what the impacts of CHS' withdrawal from the global deaf network might be and if this may affect the future position and operation of CHS.

One of the first questions that needs to be asked is, how does the withdrawal from the global deaf network impact deaf people in Ontario? To more fully understand the implication of this withdrawal, it is important to ask questions such as: What sort of information and news has been gathered by CHS representatives at deaf megaevents, has this information been impactful to the operation of CHS, and has this information been disseminated among the Ontario deaf community? Such analysis may show us that deaf people in Ontario, including clients and staff at CHS, will lose out on a significant connection to the knowledge and information circulating within the transnational deaf public sphere.

The consequences of CHS' disconnect from local and global deaf networks may also extend to the transnational deaf public sphere. That is, this sphere may also lose out on an important link through which information about current news and events unfolding in the Ontario deaf community have previously been shared with a global audience. Such information includes updates like the anti-audism policy implemented at CHS, but also information about more significant moments in the Ontario deaf community, like the passage of Bill 4 under which ASL and LSQ were able to be used in Ontario schools. We need to ask questions about how changes at CHS may lead to repercussions felt on a global level: How has the previous participation of CHS employees linked the global deaf network with news and events taking place in Ontario and how has such information been received by those in attendance at deaf megaevents? We also need to ask if and how the past involvement of CHS at events like world

Congress may have connected the experiences and work of staff only minimally involved with the transnational deaf public sphere with a global network. This will help to determine if the reduction of deaf staff at CHS results in a loss that extends to the transnational deaf public sphere.

And lastly, we need to ask what CHS' separation from the transnational deaf public sphere might mean for the future position of CHS. We have seen that the focus on audiological services has meant that qualifications such as lived experience and knowledge of sign language become less important; how might this shift perpetuate further disconnect between the organization and the deaf community at local, national, and global levels? What sort of information or examples of resistance used to address and reverse oppression impacting deaf people in other parts of the world - information that might circulate at events like WFD congresses - might CHS miss out on by choosing to focus on the deaf person solely as a client? And what might this disconnect mean for the future operation of the organization and the provision of services? The Deaf Citizens petition warns that the increased "attention to providing audiological services" at CHS has detracted from the attention given to "the communication and service needs of Deaf people" (Deaf Citizens, n.d.). We should be seriously concerned about the future direction of the organization.<sup>5</sup>

The Deaf Citizens response is concerned about these very questions. However, it is unclear what the outcome of the Deaf Citizens website and petition will be. This paper, in exploring some of the global implications of actions implemented at CHS, has aimed to express the urgent need for those in decision-making positions to heed the demands of the deaf community. The time is now, as the Deaf Citizen petitioners assert, for those in decision-making positions at CHS to "take immediate steps to engage in community dialogue and implement

constructive actions to restore confidence, and return CHS to its original role in representing and speaking on behalf of Deaf Canadians, and providing services to improve Deaf people's lives” (Deaf Citizens, n.d.).

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### Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.deafcitizens.ca](http://www.deafcitizens.ca).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the argument that recent actions at CHS represent a separation between the organization and the deaf community, made in both the Deaf Citizens petition and this paper, are focused on the actions and decisions made by those at the top levels of CHS who can direct the future aims and mission of the organization.

<sup>3</sup> For more discussion around Cotas and the ways we are both inside and outside of deaf and hearing spaces and communities, see Preston, P. (1994). *Mother father deaf: living between sound and silence*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>4</sup> There are many different terms being used to describe the international travel, experiences, and global connectedness of deaf people (see Friedner & Kusters, 2015). Friedner and Kusters (2015) suggest that “the concept of (deaf) networks offers more potential than the concept of the (deaf) community” (2015, p. xix). Schmitt (2015) sees the idea of a network as a series of “connections” that can become increasingly “entangled or disentangled” (p. 16). For these reasons, I use the term ‘global deaf network,’ however, I also use Murray’s (2007) term—the transnational deaf public sphere—especially when emphasizing the existence of a world of knowledge and information that is generally devalued and invisible outside that sphere.

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note at the time of this writing, more than 9 months after the start of the initial lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, audiology clinics at CHS are open for in-person service but programs like Literacy Services remain virtual.