DEAF ONTARIANS AND MOVIE INDUSTRY ACHIEVE 'WIN/WIN' VICTORY FOR MOVIE CAPTIONING

On July 24, 2007, three Deaf Ontarians, Scott Simser, an Ottawa lawyer, Gary Malkowski, public affairs executive and Nancy Barker, a Masters student, achieved a resounding victory with an out-of-tribunal settlement with the movie industry, including Cineplex, Alliance Atlantis, Rainbow Cinemas, AMC Theatres, and Universal Studios. This settlement applies only to the Province of Ontario and concludes a major consolidated human rights proceeding at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. One major studio at this proceeding, Paramount Pictures, however remains in litigation with one Complainant, Scott Simser. The Paramount case will continue at the Tribunal.

The settlement includes the installation of new closed captioning systems in multiple Ontario theatres. These installations will occur on a phased-in basis following a comprehensive selection and testing period of new commercially available closed captioning systems by the exhibitors. Most of the exhibitors have also agreed to add a closed captioning system to all new theatres opened in the province of Ontario. The agreement also includes the appointment of a monitor to oversee settlement obligations.

In light of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and the Ontario Human Rights Code, the movie industry has recognized their legal obligation and duty to accommodate movie-goers with disabilities, including Deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing individuals.

"Our more than twenty affiliated organizations and our numerous supporters are thrilled with the news," says Lori Archer, Chair of the Caption Movies Now Coalition (CMNC), "Our community has struggled for years to be part of society through this important medium, and at long last, we've finally arrived at our moment of truth! Now we will do our part to ensure that the rest of Canada enjoys the same level of access – not just Ontario, as we have a strong and vibrant community all across Canada! We also strongly urge Paramount to settle and reap the benefits of working closely with our community."

The CMNC through the support of corporate sponsors, notably Onestop Media Group, are working together to organize fundraising activities in support of the objectives of CMNC to continue to ensure 100% captioning in the movie theatres across Canada.

“We applaud Mr. Simser, Mr. Malkowski, Ms. Barker and CMNC for championing access for deaf, deafened and hard of hearing movie-goers and congratulate the movie theatre, studio and distribution industries for moving to make movies in the theatre more accessible,” says CHS President and CEO, Kelly Duffin

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Caption Movies Now Coalition - (www.captionmoviesnow.com) CMNC was established in 2005 with support from individuals and organizations all across Canada. The Caption Movies Now Coalition (CMNC) demands that all movies be distributed, as of the date of release, with captions that meet professional standards of readability and accuracy. Through their website, the CMNC intends to support the Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals in Canada, to obtain equitable access to movies shown in theatres in their own neighbourhood, including first-run movie theatres.

ONESTOP Media Group - (www.onestopmediagroup.com) The Caption Movies Now Coalition’s website is sponsored by ONESTOP Media Group. With an audience of over 1 million viewers weekly, ONESTOP is Canada’s largest Out-of-Home Digital Media Network operator for the mass transit, hospitality, retail and conference industries.

Onestop is a supporter of the Deaf Community and the enablement of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing through the use of display technology.

The Canadian Hearing Society -
(www.chs.ca) Established in 1940, The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) is the largest agency of its kind in Canada, employing approximately 475 people who deliver 17 programs, from Employment Counseling and Interpreting Services to Hearing Aids and Communication Devices, through 28 regional and area offices. CHS is 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.

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