

September 6, 2006

Dr. Victor Rabinovitch, President and CEO,
Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation
100 Laurier St.
Gatineau, Quebec
J8X 4H2

Dear Dr. Rabinovitch,

I am writing to you on matter of great concern to me and to all hard of hearing and deafened persons visiting the Canadian Museum of Civilization. On Sunday, September 3, I visited the museum with my family and was very disappointed to attend a showing of "Greece" at the IMAX Theatre and discover that the museum does not have an assistive listening system installed in this theatre. I was told it was very loud. Loudness does not correspond to understanding. The museum may be proud of its 150th anniversary, but how many more years do hard of hearing persons need to wait before it is accessible? Your website notes in the Special Needs Services page:

The Museum makes every effort to ensure that visitors with disabilities will have a satisfying visit. With only a few minor exceptions, the Museum is a barrier-free building.

How does denying the largest single population of persons with disabilities qualify as a minor exception? I attended the museum when it opened in its current location in Hull in 1989. We were told then that in due time accessibility would be provided and that the museum had a plan in place. That was 17 years ago. How much longer do we need to wait?

Your website also notes "*The CMCC conforms to and is influenced by federal and provincial legislation*" (About the Corporation). I find this hard to believe because if this is true then the Corporation is in contravention of both the federal and provincial human rights codes which state clearly that accessibility must be provided.

The Museum has had 17 years since moving into its Gatineau location to provide the following:

1. Installation of a permanent Assistive Listening System in the IMAX Theatre. This can either be an Infrared or an FM system with receivers available at the Information Desk
2. Provision of portable Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) for docents and other tour guides. An FM system would work best in a situation such as the Petra special exhibit, which I also attended, and where I noted the tour guide was speaking too softly for me to understand.
3. Clear and obvious Signage at the Information Desk and Ticket Counter informing patrons of the museum that ALDs are available.
4. The Museum websites must also inform its readers about the availability of ALD's and how to obtain one.

Mr. Rabinovitch, though I have not had the pleasure of visiting the new Canadian War Museum, I assume that the situation must be similar there as it is at the Museum of Civilization. Given that the elderly and so many of our veterans have hearing loss due to aging or as a direct cause of their faithful service to Canada, I request that the Canadian War Museum also review its accessibility services to the hard of hearing and take steps to provide access with due diligence.

Our association would be pleased to meet with your staff to discuss this further; however, I want to be very clear in stating that we are no longer willing to wait years to see this issue resolved. With your support, I would like to turn my negative experience at your museum into positive experiences for your patrons in 2007.

Sincerely,

Michel David, President,
Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
National Capital Region Branch

CC:

The Hon. Beverly J. Oda, Minister of Canadian Heritage
Claudette Roy, Chair, Board of Trustees
Joseph Geurts, The Canadian War Museum, Director and CEO
Jack Frost, Dominion President, The Royal Canadian Legion
Carole Willans-Théberge, President, CHHA