

Special Interest Article

Government Aid Programs for the Communicatively Handicapped

Recently Human Communication Canada received a suggestion from a National Councillor asking that we conduct a survey and report on the provincial government programs designed to provide equipment for communicatively handicapped people. Accordingly, we asked the National Councillors to supply us with such information. This article is a compilation of the data we received.

*Mary Jane Cairns,
Assistant Editor.*

Hearing Aids: The province of Quebec is the only one in which hearing aids are provided free of charge under the Medicare System. Ontario, under its new program, provides them for children eighteen years and under. On recommendation from an audiologist or otolaryngologist, Manitoba pays the remainder on aids for children eighteen years and under, after the parents pay \$75.00 plus 20% of the balance. The Saskatchewan Hearing Aid Plan (SHAP) provides aids at cost (social assistance clients pay 30% of cost) to all ages, as does Nova Scotia for persons aged 21 years and under who are registered as hearing handicapped. In British Columbia, the Ministry of Health sells aids at "reasonable cost". The Department of Health in Newfoundland loans aids to students and welfare clients. In Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick there is no program per se, but people who can prove that they cannot afford a hearing aid may get assistance from the appropriate government department. Some provinces have special plans for senior citizens - in Nova Scotia this is at the municipal level, so depending on where they live, some seniors get assistance. All provinces reporting programs require testing by a qualified audiologist.

Auditory Trainers/FM Systems: Funding for these systems varies among provinces, and even within a province. Pre-school and School for the Deaf children seem to be well provided for, and in some provinces the Department of Education supplies systems for school-age children. In Saskatchewan the government SHAP program loans units to pre-schoolers and the Department of Education takes over when the children enter school. Manitoba provides units to students - pre-school through University for school and home use. In Quebec the individual school boards are responsible for supplying the units. Ontario's new plan covers children 18 years and under, but does not provide units for schools. B.C. sells trainers for "reasonable cost". In Newfoundland, mainstreamed children must buy their own, although some school divisions do provide them, and the School for the Deaf loans some. In P.E.I., New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, patients are responsible for providing their own system, although there is the possibility of obtaining assistance from Social Service departments, or through private organizations.

Telephone Equipment: Although only four provincial reports specifically mentioned telephone devices, it is probably safe to assume that the other provincial programs and/or telephone companies also provide such services, if not free, then at reduced cost. Newfoundland Telephone provides free of charge handset amplifiers and volume control attachments plus a variety of bells, buzzers and horns, and visual signals. Visual ears which will communicate with other visual ears or the teletype network are available for purchase. The Manitoba program provides, free, except for installation charge, one telephone with volume control to hearing handicapped persons and one teletype set every five years at a cost to the customer of \$75.00

plus 20% up to a maximum of \$220.00. The SAIL (Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living) program covers any additional charges involved in adapting a telephone and providing telewriters to hearing handicapped persons, and also provides an additional telewriter to a person designated by the recipient. The Saskatchewan Telephone Company also provides telewriters at reduced cost. In Nova Scotia handset amplifiers are provided to persons certified as hearing impaired and the telephone company has also supplied some public telephones with such devices. Visual ears are also available.

Speech Aids: The majority of reports indicated no government funding or limited assistance for speech aids. Of those provinces which do provide such funding, Ontario's new plan appears to be the most comprehensive, including a variety of electronic aids (electrolarynx, computer, visual displays, recording aids for written communication) as well as symbol boards and devices such as palatal lifts and obturators for cleft palate patients. Manitoba laryngectomees receive electrolarynges on loan through the provincial Home Care Equipment Program administered through the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre. Telephone volume controls are provided at installation cost by the Manitoba Telephone System. Voice synthesizers are available only on short-term loan for assessment purposes. In Quebec, laryngectomees are fully provided for through a centre at Notre Dame Hospital in Montreal and the Hotel Dieu in Quebec City. The Quebec Régie de l'assurance automobile covers any rehabilitation equipment required because of an automobile accident.

The SAIL program in Saskatchewan funds artificial larynges and telephone aids. All SAIL equipment is on loan and must be returned when the user no longer needs it. In Newfoundland the Department of Social Services Child Allowance Program provides financial assistance for low-income families only. All cleft palate patients are provided with whatever orthodontic and other assistive devices (e.g. obturators) free of charge. Newfoundland Telephone supplies voice amplifiers at no charge. The Department of Health and Social Services in P.E.I. owns a variety of communication devices which are available on short-term loan for assessment or to replace temporarily a device which is being repaired. For long-term use the patient must purchase his own. In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia no government funding is available for speech aids. Cleft palate patients registered with the Isaac Walton Killam Cleft Palate Team receive all necessary appliances.

Entrance to all programs requires authorization by referring physicians, audiologists or speech pathologists, and in some provinces, by specified clinical teams (Ontario). Some reports pointed out that while devices may not be provided, services and appropriate equipment are, so governments are providing some assistance for the communicatively handicapped.

Many provincial reports mentioned a variety of other sources for funding of speech and hearing aids. Such sources include Department of Veterans Affairs, Workers Compensation Boards, School Boards and service organizations such as the Kinsmen Clubs. There appears to be help available everywhere for those in financially reduced circumstances. For others however, the amount of help available not only varies, but in some areas is non-existent.

This survey has tried to provide an overview of provincial government programs designed to provide equipment for the communicatively handicapped. Situations in each province may change. If reports on changes are sent to Human Communication Canada, the information will be shared

In an updated report. Several councillors mentioned the need for speech and hearing associations to lobby for additional government support for communicatively handicapped people. Some provincial associations are already actively engaged in such pursuits.

Note: Our thanks to the National Councillors and to David R. Bellaire, President, B.C.S.H.A.; Eleanor Anderson, Speech and Hearing Co-Ordinator, Department of Health and Social Services, P.E.I.; and Brenda Righetti, Speech-Language Pathology Consultant, Saskatchewan Community Services, for their contributions to this article.

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CSHA History

From: Margaret Roberts

In our first directory there were 145 individuals listed as members of the newly formed CSHA. Our 1983 directory listed 912 members. The geographical distribution of us then and now can be seen in the following list:

	Directory #1 (1965)	Directory #9 (1983)
Alberta	14	194
British Columbia	15	167
Manitoba	24	40
New Brunswick	3	21
Newfoundland	0	17
Northwest Territories	0	4
Nova Scotia	2	72
Ontario	26	225
Prince Edward Island	1	9
Quebec	47	89
Saskatchewan	10	49
Yukon	0	1
U.S.A.	3	17
Other	0	7
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