

SEPTEMBER 28, 2011 - CHRIS KENOPIC

DEBRA RUSSELL: GOOD EVENING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA.

IT'S AN HONOUR FOR US TONIGHT TO HOST THIS PRESENTATION, AND WE'RE VERY HAPPY THAT YOU ALL CAME HERE TONIGHT. IT'S NICE TO SEE SO MANY PEOPLE HERE.

I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND THANKS TO ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF FOR THEIR PARTNERSHIP THAT THEY HAVE MADE WITH US FOR THIS EVENING. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK AAD FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN PROVIDING AND HOSTING THE WINE AND CHEESE FOLLOWING OUR LECTURE.

THE PEIKOFF CHAIR TYPICALLY DOES NOT HOST A WINE AND CHEESE AFTER OUR LECTURES, SO THIS IS A VERY SPECIAL EVENING. SO I HOPE YOU ALL WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY THAT AFTER THE LECTURE.

THE PEIKOFF LECTURES TYPICALLY HAPPEN TWICE A YEAR, THREE TIMES A YEAR, AND PROVIDES US ALL WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NEW RESEARCH OR INFORMATION WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY. AND TONIGHT WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A PERSON PRESENTING FROM THE DEAF PERSPECTIVE.

BEFORE WE BEGIN, I WOULD LIKE TO INVITE GRANT UNDERSCHULTZ TO COME UP AND SHARE SOME GREETINGS FROM ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF.

GRANT UNDERSCHULTZ: GOOD EVENING, EVERYBODY.

DEB JUST THANKED AAD, AND NOW I WOULD LIKE TO RETURN THAT THANKS FOR INVITING US TO BE A PART OF THIS EVENING AND MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FACILITIES HERE.

CHRIS AND I HAVE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE ATTENDING GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY TOGETHER, AND I WORKED ON THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF BOARD UNDER HIS DIRECTION. AND SO I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS PRESENTATION THIS EVENING, AND I HOPE YOU ENJOY IT AS WELL.

DEBRA RUSSELL: IT IS NOW MY PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE TO YOU ROUZBEH GHAREMAN. HE'S GOING TO INTRODUCE OUR PRESENTER FOR THE EVENING.

ROUZBEH IS ACTUALLY A Ph.D. STUDENT HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA. HE'S A DEAF GENTLEMAN WHO IS ORIGINALLY FROM IRAN AND MOVED HERE A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO TO ATTEND THE UNIVERSITY. SO PLEASE COME FORWARD, ROUZBEH.

ROUZBEH GHAREMAN: THANK YOU, DEBBIE.

HELLO, EVERYBODY, AND I WELCOME EVERYBODY HERE TONIGHT. FRIENDS, DEAF -- MEMBERS OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY, THANK YOU FOR COMING TONIGHT.

BEING THAT THIS IS INTERNATIONAL DEAF AWARENESS WEEK, THERE ARE SEVERAL EVENTS THAT ARE TAKING PLACE, AND ONE OF THEM OF COURSE IS OUR LECTURE TONIGHT WITH CHRIS KENOPIK.

I KNOW CHRIS TO BE A WONDERFUL MAN WHO IS A VERY STRONG ADVOCATE FOR THE DEAF COMMUNITY. WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED HERE FROM IRAN, I MOVED TO TORONTO, AND THAT WAS IN 2003. AND ABOUT THREE MONTHS AFTER MOVING TO TORONTO, I WENT TO MONTREAL TO ATTEND A WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF CONFERENCE, AND THAT WAS WHERE I FIRST MET CHRIS AND WAS EXTREMELY INSPIRED BY ALL THE WORK THAT HE HAS

DONE. I KNEW THAT HE WAS PART OF ONTARIO'S ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF AND LEARNED A LOT ABOUT THE WORK HE DID WITH THEM AND WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH HIS DEDICATION.

HE WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN THE RALLIES RELATING TO AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AND INCREASING AWARENESS AND WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH THAT AS WELL.

SO WHEN I MOVED TO EDMONTON ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO, I WAS SOMEWHAT AWARE OF THE SERVICES THAT WERE OFFERED HERE, BUT I CERTAINLY DID EXPERIENCE SOME FRUSTRATIONS IN TERMS OF THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY AND THE SERVICES THAT WERE OFFERED.

AND THEN I HAD HEARD IN 2010 IN JUNE THAT THERE HAD BEEN A NEW CEO ELECTED FOR CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY, AND THAT WAS CHRIS KENOPIK. AND FOLLOWING HIS SELECTION, I BEGAN TO RECEIVE MORE AND MORE INFORMATION FROM CHS AND STARTED TO BE MORE INFORMED OF NEWS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, AND I REALLY NOTICED A DIFFERENCE.

AND NOW CHS IS UNDER -- WITH 450 STAFF MEMBERS IS UNDER HIS GUIDANCE.

AND I'M SURE THAT WE WILL ALL BENEFIT FROM HIS PRESENTATION TONIGHT AND LEARN A LOT OF THINGS FROM HIM, AND I'M SO EXCITED THAT HE'S HERE TONIGHT. I'M SO EXCITED THAT HE WAS SELECTED TO BE THE CEO OF CHS, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING WHAT HE HAS TO SAY THIS EVENING.

WELCOME, CHRIS.

CHRIS KENOPIK: WELL, THANK YOU FOR THAT INTRODUCTION, AND I'M TRULY HONOURED, ROUZBEH, THAT YOU ARE HERE IN EDMONTON TAKING YOUR PH.D. I'M VERY PROUD OF YOU. VERY PROUD. THAT'S FANTASTIC.

YOU KNOW, INITIALLY WHEN I WAS ASKED TO COME TO ALBERTA I HAD NO HESITATION. I THINK ALBERTA IS THE SECOND BEST PROVINCE IN CANADA. OF COURSE I FAVOUR ONTARIO.

YOU'RE OKAY WITH THAT, RIGHT?

AT ANY RATE, I HAVE MET SOME OF YOU DURING THIS WEEK AND HAVE TALKED WITH MANY OF YOU ABOUT WHERE I'M FROM, WHO I AM, AND REALLY IN MY PRESENTATION I DO LEAVE A LITTLE BIT OF ROOM TO MOVE, A LITTLE WIGGLE ROOM. I DON'T LIKE TO FOLLOW A SCRIPT. I'M NOT THAT TYPE OF PRESENTER. I LIKE TO GO WITH THE FLOW, FOLLOW THE MOODS OF THE AUDIENCE.

OR SOMETIMES AN EXPERIENCE WILL PRESENT ITSELF AND QUESTIONS WILL BE ASKED, AND THAT LENDS TO A BETTER PRESENTATION. AND SO IN MY PRESENTATION, IF THERE'S SOMETHING THAT YOU FEEL IS MISSING, PLEASE PUT UP YOUR HAND. I WILL GO BACK. I WILL ELABORATE.

YOU KNOW THAT ONCE I'M DONE THERE'S A WINE AND CHEESE. YOU KNOW THAT?

BUT BEFORE YOU'RE ALLOWED TO GO TO THAT, I WILL BE QUIZZING YOU. IF YOU PASS THE QUIZ, I WILL PERMIT YOU TO ATTEND THE WINE AND CHEESE. (Sarcasm).

WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE A CART PROVIDER TONIGHT. WE HAVE INTERPRETERS TONIGHT. I WILL KEEP AN EYE ON EVERYBODY. AND IS EVERYBODY OKAY SO FAR?

JANICE? OKAY, GREAT.

I MIGHT NEED A LITTLE BIT OF ASSISTANCE IN PROGRESSING WITH THE SLIDES.

OH, GREAT.

REALLY, I DO HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THERE IS ONE NEGATIVE FEATURE

TO ME BECOMING A CEO. I HAVE A LINEUP OF STAFF MEMBERS THAT ASSIST WITH ALL OF THESE TECHNICAL DEVICES, AND I HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW TO USE SOME OF THEM.

SO THERE I AM.

AND I'M SURE THAT MANY OF YOU REMEMBER THE OLD LOGO FOR THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY. AND A LOT OF CONCERNS CAME FROM THE DEAF COMMUNITY IN TERMS OF CHANGING THAT LOGO TO REFLECT A MORE POSITIVE IMAGE.

AND SO HERE YOU CAN SEE WE DO NOW HAVE A NEW LOGO.

AND SOME OF YOU MIGHT WONDER WHAT DOES THAT SYMBOLIZE?

AND I THINK IF YOU'RE AWARE OF OUR MISSION, WE REALLY EMPHASIZE RESPECTING FOUR LANGUAGES: AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE, FRENCH SIGN LANGUAGE, ENGLISH, AND FRENCH.

THE OTHER REASON WHY WE CAME UP WITH THIS LOGO WAS TO LOOK AT THE VARIETY OF DEAF CONSUMERS THAT WE SERVE: DEAF INDIVIDUALS, ORAL INDIVIDUALS, HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS, AND THOSE WHO BECOME DEAFENED.

THE DOT IN THE MIDDLE, I BELIEVE, REPRESENTS ANY INDIVIDUAL. SO WE'RE NOT LIMITING ANY CULTURAL GROUP. IT COULD BE A MEMBER FROM THE HEARING SOCIETY, GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIONS. IT COULD BE ANYBODY.

SO THE LOGO ENCOMPASSES ALL PEOPLE OF ALL WALKS OF ALL SOCIETIES.

AND IT SEEMS THAT WE'VE RECEIVED A VERY POSITIVE RESPONSE TO THIS LOGO IN COMPARISON TO THE IDENTITY THAT WE ONCE HAD WITH THE EAR REPRESENTING CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY.

AND THAT WAS A MORE TRADITIONAL APPROACH, BUT I THINK OVERALL

WE'VE CHANGED THAT, AND IT'S BEEN VERY WELL ACCEPTED.

PEOPLE ARE CONSTANTLY ASKING ME WHO I AM, SO I'LL SHARE A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME.

I WAS BORN IN ONTARIO IN A VERY SMALL TOWN IN RENFREW, WHICH IS NORTH OF OTTAWA. QUITE A SMALL TOWN, JUST NEAR QUEBEC. MAYBE ABOUT A 20-MINUTE DRIVE ACROSS OVER INTO THE QUEBEC.

I WAS ALSO BORN DEAF, AND MY FAMILY DID NOT KNOW I WAS DEAF UNTIL I WAS ABOUT 5 OR 6 YEARS OF AGE. IT WAS AT THAT TIME WE WENT TO THE DOCTOR, TRIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON, AND BASICALLY THE DOCTOR IDENTIFIED ME ON PAPER AS BEING MENTALLY RETARDED. WHICH WAS VERY DISCONCERTING FOR MY FAMILY.

OUR SON IS MENTALLY RETARDED.

SO WHEN WE GOT HOME, MY FAMILY WASN'T CONVINCED THAT THAT WAS ACTUALLY MY DIAGNOSIS. WE LIVED ON A FARM, AND SO OF COURSE KIDS LOVE PLAYING AROUND IN THE FARMYARDS, RIGHT. GOING TO THE CHICKEN COOP, COLLECTING ALL THE EGGS, FEEDING THE PIGS, HAVING FUN WITH ALL THE ANIMALS. AND MY FAMILY WITNESSED ME DOING ALL OF THESE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES AND THOUGHT THIS CAN'T BE RIGHT. LET'S GO BACK FOR MORE TESTING.

SO WE DID DO THAT, AND THEY REFERRED US TO ANOTHER DOCTOR IN KINGSTON, ONTARIO. AND AT THAT TIME TRANSPORTATION WAS QUITE EXPENSIVE. WE DIDN'T HAVE A VEHICLE. WE ONLY HAD FARMYARD VEHICLES. WE HAD AN OLD TRUCK BASICALLY THAT WAS JUST TO WORK AROUND THE FARM BUT NOT REALLY RECOMMENDED TO USE ON THE HIGHWAY. SO TRAIN WAS AN OPTION.

SO WE DID GET ON THE TRAIN, TRAVELED TO OTTAWA AND THEN HAD TO GO BACK TO KINGSTON. AND THIS IS WHERE ALL THE TESTING WAS DONE

THAT DIAGNOSED ME AS DEAF. OF COURSE.

BUT IRONICALLY WITH THAT DIAGNOSIS, MY MOM WAS MORE UPSET THAT I WAS GIVEN THAT DIAGNOSIS AS BEING DEAF VERSUS THE INITIAL MENTAL RETARDED DIAGNOSIS. SHE THOUGHT THAT WAS BETTER.

AND INTERESTINGLY, THAT'S STILL THE SAME TYPE OF VIEW THAT WE'RE SEEING TODAY, THAT BEING DEAF IS A HORRIFIC DIAGNOSIS TO HAVE. SO I DON'T KNOW THAT WE'VE SEEN MUCH CHANGES OVER TIME.

WHEN I WAS 7 OR 8 I BEGAN ATTENDING PUBLIC SCHOOL. I WAS A GOOD BOY. NO. I WAS THE ONLY BOY IN A CLASS OF 30, AND I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD THE TEACHER SAID. SHE WOULD WRITE ON THE BLACKBOARD, LOOK AROUND, AND I WOULDN'T PAY ATTENTION. AND THEN THE TEACHER WOULD COME TO ME AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM. SMACK THE DESK AND START YELLING AT ME. AND I REALLY DIDN'T REALIZE SHE WAS ACTUALLY TALKING TO ME BECAUSE SHE WOULD TURN HER BACK AND WALK AWAY TO THE FRONT OF THE CLASSROOM AGAIN.

I ALSO DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS. I WAS PICKED ON QUITE A BIT. AND I HAVE A NUMBER OF EXPERIENCES, BUT THERE'S ONE STORY THAT IS ETCHED IN MY BRAIN.

THERE WAS A GROUP OF BOYS WHO WERE NOT MY FRIENDS, AND THEY WOULD GESTURE, DO YOU WANT TO PLAY HIDE AND SEEK? COME ON, LET'S PLAY HIDE AND SEEK. AND I THOUGHT OH, GREAT, THEY'RE FINALLY INCLUDING ME. THEY'RE FINALLY ASKING ME TO PLAY WITH THEM. BECAUSE UP UNTIL THAT POINT I WOULD WANDER AROUND THE PLAYGROUND ALONE. I WOULD SEE KIDS PLAYING AND THEN I WOULD SEE THEM RUNNING INTO THE SCHOOL BECAUSE THE RECESS BELL HAD RUNG, AND I WAS ALWAYS ALONE. SO WHEN THEY ASKED ME TO JOIN THEM IN PLAYING A GAME I WAS ECSTATIC.

SO THEY LED ME BACK TO THE FAR FIELD OF THE SCHOOL AND TOLD ME I HAD TO COVER MY EYES AND COUNT TO 100 AND THEN GO AND FIND ALL THE BOYS. SO I WAS SO THRILLED. SO I COUNTED. AND I JUST -- THE HAIR ON MY BACK WAS JUST RAISED WITH EXCITEMENT. I FELT LIKE I WON A MILLION-DOLLAR LOTTERY OR SOMETHING.

I DID MY COUNTING, I TURNED AROUND, AND TO MY DISMAY -- REMEMBER, AT RECESS TIME 200 KIDS THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE FIELD -- MY EYES SAW NOTHING. I TURNED AROUND, AND THERE WAS NOBODY THERE. SO I KNEW THAT THEY HAD PLAYED A TRICK ON ME KNOWING THAT I COULDN'T HEAR THE RECESS BELL. AND OF COURSE THAT MEANT THAT I GOT BACK INTO CLASS LATE BECAUSE I MISSED THE RECESS BELL. THEN I WAS PUNISHED.

AND IT JUST WENT ON AND ON. I WAS IN FIGHTS ALL THE TIME. I WAS SENT TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE. I WONDERED, WHY IS IT ME ALWAYS IN THE OFFICE AND NOT THE OTHER BOYS.

SO IT WAS VERY FRUSTRATING.

AND THEN I REMEMBER MY SUITCASE BEING PACKED. AND AT THAT TIME, YOU KNOW, I DID HAVE A HEARING AID THAT WAS ATTACHED TO A RECEIVING TRANSMITTER DEVICE, AND I REALLY DIDN'T HEAR WELL WITH IT TO BEGIN WITH. SO ALL OF THE CHATTER THAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE ROOM ABOUT WHERE WE WERE GOING AND WHAT WE WERE DOING I WAS REALLY NOT AWARE OF.

AND REMEMBER, WE DIDN'T HAVE A VEHICLE AT THAT TIME, SO MY UNCLE CAME AND DROVE ME TWO HOURS -- ABOUT TWO AND A HALF HOURS TO BELLEVILLE WHERE THERE WAS A VERY LARGE, OLD-LOOKING BUILDING THAT WE DROVE UP TO. AND TO ME IT LOOKED LIKE A PRISON OR SOMETHING. I WAS VERY, VERY NERVOUS ABOUT WHAT I WAS WALKING INTO.

SO I COWERED BEHIND MY MOM AS WE WALKED IN. THERE WAS A TEACHER SITTING BEHIND THIS OLD DESK, AND MOM SAT ME DOWN AND BASICALLY WAVED BYE-BYE AND LEFT.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK MY REACTION WAS? OF COURSE I WAS SCREAMING AND WAILING BUT I COULDN'T GET OUT BEHIND THE DESK. THE TEACHER WAS SO BIG. I FELT I WAS PINNED BEHIND THE DESK. I WAS LITERALLY STUCK, AND MOM WAS GONE. I WAS SCARED TO DEATH. I OPENED THE DOOR AND LOOKED FOR MOM. SHE WAS GONE.

SO I WAS FRIGHTENED.

AND THEN A LITTLE GIRL CAME UP TO ME AND STARTED SIGNING, AND I THOUGHT, I DON'T KNOW WHO THIS IS AND WHAT IS SHE DOING. SO SHE LED ME THROUGH THE SCHOOL AND FED ME THESE LITTLE SIGNS HERE AND THERE TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC OBJECTS. AND I ALMOST FELT LIKE HELEN KELLER AT ONE MOMENT, GOING THROUGH ALL THE STRUGGLES. I FELT I WAS DROWNING ALL THE TIME. LEARNING ALL OF THESE THINGS AT ONCE, IT WAS VERY OVERWHELMING.

THAT ALL HAPPENED ON A TUESDAY. AND I STAYED IN RESIDENCE. IT WAS A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL. AND I REMEMBER WE WERE ALLOWED TO GO HOME TWICE A MONTH, I THINK IT WAS. AND MY FAMILY FIGURED OUT THAT, YOU KNOW, DROP ME OFF ON TUESDAY AND THEN LET ME COME HOME THAT VERY FIRST FRIDAY, JUST TO TRANSITION ME INTO THIS ACTUAL CHANGE THAT I WAS GOING TO BE GOING THROUGH.

BY FRIDAY I DIDN'T WANT TO GO HOME. I WANTED TO STAY. I WAS THRILLED TO DEATH TO BE SURROUNDED BY AN ENVIRONMENT THAT I WAS LEARNING AND SIGNING.

AND REMEMBER, AT THAT TIME IN THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS YOU WERE NOT ALLOWED TO USE SIGN IN THE CLASSROOMS, IN THE FORMAL SETTINGS.

BUT AT RECESS TIME, OUT IN THE HALLS, OUR HANDS WERE UP AND WE WERE GOING.

AND OF COURSE I WENT THROUGH VARIOUS MODES OF COMMUNICATION. ORAL, FINGERSPELLING, ROCHESTER METHOD. I WENT THROUGH TOTAL COMMUNICATION, SIGNED ENGLISH, YOU NAME IT.

AND ON GRADUATION, I WAS SELECTED AS VALEDICTORIAN FOR MY CLASS, AND I WAS TRULY HONOURED TO REPRESENT MY CLASS. I PRACTICED AND PRACTICED OVER AND OVER AGAIN TO DELIVER THE BEST SPEECH THAT I COULD GIVE.

HOWEVER, I DIDN'T WRITE MY OWN SPEECH. THE TEACHER WROTE MY SPEECH.

BECAUSE AT THAT TIME WE THOUGHT, WELL, OF COURSE. WHY WOULD WE WRITE OUR OWN SPEECH. YOU KNOW. THAT'S JUST SILLY TO THINK THAT WE WOULD BE ABLE TO DO THAT. THE HEARING TEACHER KNOWS BEST. SHE IS GOING TO WRITE THE SPEECH FOR US OR HE'S GOING TO.

AND THE PRESENTATION WAS DELIVERED IN SUCH A STYLE WHERE WE WERE SIGNING AND SPEAKING AT THE SAME TIME, AND I REMEMBER NO ONE IN MY CLASS WAS WATCHING ME AT ALL. MY PEERS, MY CLASSMATES WERE JUST CHATTING AMONGST THEMSELVES. ALL OF MY FRIENDS THAT I THOUGHT WERE MY FRIENDS, WE DID ALL KINDS OF THINGS TOGETHER. WE SMOKED TOGETHER, FISHED TOGETHER, WE TOOK OFF AND MISBEHAVED TOGETHER. AND IT REALLY WAS A BIT OF A LETDOWN FOR ME.

BUT AT THAT TIME I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

SO WHEN I GRADUATED, I THEN WENT OFF TO GALLAUDET.

AND MY GIRLFRIEND AT THE TIME, LAUREEN, HAD NOT -- OF COURSE WE'RE MARRIED NOW, BUT I ATTENDED HER GRADUATION DAY. AND SHE WAS ALSO PICKED AS THE VALEDICTORIAN, AND SHE WAS UP THERE DELIVERING

HER SPEECH IN ASL, AMAZING, AND THE ENTIRE CLASS WAS PAYING ATTENTION TO HER LIKE THERE WAS NO TOMORROW. EVERYBODY WAS EYES ON HER.

SO THAT WAS HOW MUCH CHANGED WITHIN A TWO-YEAR SPAN. VERY, VERY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, AND THE LANGUAGE CHANGED.

I GRADUATED FROM GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY AND RECEIVED MY BACHELORS IN COMMUNICATIONS.

I WASN'T REALLY SURE THAT I UNDERSTOOD WHAT COMMUNICATIONS MEANT AT THE TIME. I THOUGHT IT MAYBE MORE REFERRED TO LANGUAGE USE, BUT THEN IT WASN'T UNTIL LATER I REALIZED IT ACTUALLY REFERRED TO THE ARTS, COMMUNICATION AND ARTS AND BUSINESS.

(Laughter).

MY WIFE AND I HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR 18 YEARS, WHICH I THINK IS FANTASTIC. I KNOW SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR MORE. THE TIME HAS GONE BY QUICKLY. WE HAVE 4 CHILDREN TOGETHER, A 13-YEAR-OLD, 11-YEAR-OLD, 7-YEAR-OLD, AND 6-YEAR-OLD. AND OUR THIRD CHILD BRADEN IS DEAF.

I KNOW A LOT OF YOU KNOW ME AND ARE AWARE OF MY INVOLVEMENT IN DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS AND WHATNOT. BUT REALLY I HAVE GALLAUDET TO THANK FOR DEVELOPING THE LEADER IN ME AND MY LEADERSHIP SKILLS THAT HAVE ENABLED ME TO BE A PART OF ALL THESE DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS.

WHEN I ATTENDED THE DEAF SCHOOL, I BECAME INVOLVED IN A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS THERE, AND I THOUGHT, YOU KNOW WHAT, I'M A PRETTY SMART GUY. SO WHEN I WENT TO GALLAUDET, I THOUGHT, YOU KNOW, I THINK I'M GOING TO DO JUST FINE THERE.

AND WHEN I TOLD MY TEACHERS THAT I WAS PLANNING ON ATTENDING

GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY, A LOT OF MY TEACHERS WERE KIND OF SHOCKED AND SURPRISED THAT I WAS ACTUALLY GOING TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY AND THAT I ACTUALLY EVEN GOT A DEGREE FROM THERE.

WHEN THE PRINCIPAL WAS ANNOUNCING ALL THE STUDENT NAMES AND SAYING WHO GOT INTO GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY AND WHATNOT, I'M SITTING THERE WAITING FOR HIM TO SAY MY NAME, AND HE DIDN'T SAY MY NAME. I THOUGHT WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON. SO I WENT AND SPOKE TO THE PRINCIPAL AFTERWARDS, AND THE PRINCIPAL SAID, WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT, I BETTER PHONE AND CONFIRM THAT YOUR NAME REALLY IS ON THE LIST. AND WELL, SURE ENOUGH, MY NAME WAS ON THE LIST, AND I WAS ACCEPTED INTO GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY. SO IT WAS QUITE A SHOCK FOR EVERYBODY, REALLY.

SO WHEN I ATTENDED GALLAUDET I BECAME VERY INVOLVED IN DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS THERE.

AFTER GRADUATION I WAS INVOLVED WITH ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF, CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF. AND YOU KNOW AT THAT TIME I WAS A YOUNG BOY. I THOUGHT I KNEW EVERYTHING. YOU KNOW, DEAF RIGHTS. YOU KNOW, I WAS READY FOR ANYTHING. I WAS PART OF THE DEAF PRESIDENT NOW MOVEMENT THAT TOOK PLACE AT GALLAUDET. I WAS THERE AT THAT TIME.

SO REALLY MOTIVATED AFTER THOSE EXPERIENCES.

I KNOW DON McCARTHY WAS ON THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF BOARD WITH ME. GRANT UNDERSCHULTZ AS WELL. AND THERE'S SOMEBODY ELSE UP THERE IN THE CROWD I SEE WHO WAS ALSO ON THE BOARD.

SO I WAS PART OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF. AND THEN THEY WON THE BID TO HOST THE WORLD CONGRESS OF THE DEAF WHEN I WAS WORKING FOR THEM. AND THERE WAS A LOT OF RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

GOING ON AT THAT TIME AND SORT OF STRUGGLES WITH WHO WAS GOING TO TAKE ON SOME MORE LEADERSHIP ROLES AND WHATNOT.

AND, YOU KNOW, I HAVE TO BE HONEST. I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE GAVE ME TOO MUCH CREDIT AT THAT TIME FOR THE SUCCESS OF THAT CONFERENCE, AND SO REALLY I WOULD JUST LIKE TO MAYBE EXTEND A WORD OF THANKS TO ANYBODY ELSE IN THE AUDIENCE RIGHT NOW WHO WAS A PART OF ORGANIZING THAT CONFERENCE. WE CERTAINLY ALL WORKED VERY HARD.

I WAS ALSO -- I ALSO WORKED AT YORK UNIVERSITY WORKING ON COMMITTEES THERE WITH DR. DAVID MASON. AND I HAVE TO THANK DR. MASON FOR MANY CHANGES THAT TOOK PLACE AT THAT UNIVERSITY AS A RESULT OF THE WORK THAT HE DID.

I WORKED AT THREE ONTARIO PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF. UNTIL I SORT OF DIVIDED THAT, YOU KNOW, I WAS GETTING A LITTLE BIT TIRED OF ALL THE POLITICS AND TRYING TO PROVE THAT ASL REALLY WAS A LANGUAGE. I FELT LIKE I WAS CONSTANTLY FIGHTING THE SAME FIGHT. YOU KNOW, AGAINST THE LARGER HEARING SOCIETY. I JUST FELT LIKE WE WEREN'T GETTING OUR POINT ACROSS, AND IT BECAME VERY FRUSTRATING.

LIKE I SAID, I HAD A BA IN ARTS, AND I THOUGHT YOU KNOW, OKAY, I DON'T HAVE A MASTERS OR Ph.D. BUT I KNEW THAT THE LINGUISTICS OF OUR LANGUAGE WAS EQUAL TO ANY OTHER LANGUAGE. I THOUGHT, YOU KNOW WHAT, I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS FIGHT AND THE POLITICS. YOU KNOW, I WOULD COME HOME EVERY NIGHT AND FEEL SO DOWN ABOUT IT. I JUST THOUGHT, YOU KNOW, I'M TIRED OF ALL OF THIS.

AND THIS WAS RIGHT AROUND THE SAME TIME AS OUR THIRD CHILD WAS BORN. AS I MENTIONED, HE WAS BORN DEAF. I THOUGHT YOU KNOW WHAT, THERE'S SOMEBODY UP THERE GIVING ME A SIGN HERE. AND I THOUGHT, YOU KNOW, I CAN'T GIVE UP. I HAVE TO KEEP GOING.

AND SO YEAH, THAT SORT OF BROUGHT -- THE BIRTH OF OUR DEAF CHILD BROUGHT ME BACK INTO THAT REALM OF ADVOCACY WITHIN THE DEAF COMMUNITY.

AND I LOOK AT MY OWN SON AND AS HE GROWS UP AND I THINK ABOUT THE STRUGGLES THAT I HAD WITH READING AND WRITING AND COMMUNICATION. I THOUGHT, I DO NOT WANT THAT FOR MY OWN CHILD. AND THAT HAS BEEN A REAL MOTIVATION FOR ME.

SO I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A LOT OF DIFFERENT COMMITTEES OVER THE YEARS. ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEES.

AND MY EXPERIENCES THERE, I CAN LOOK AROUND THE CROWD AND TELL YOU THAT I KNOW EVERYBODY OUT HERE TONIGHT HAS DIFFERENT SKILLS THAT WOULD POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORK THAT THESE DIFFERENT SORT OF ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEES ARE DOING.

YOU KNOW, IT'S ONE THING TO BE ON AN ALL-DEAF BOARD, BUT TO BE THE ONLY DEAF PERSON ON A BOARD IS A VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE.

ON A -- IF YOU'RE ON AN ALL-DEAF BOARD, YOU DO HAVE SOME LIMITATIONS BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT EXPOSING THE LARGER COMMUNITY TO THE ISSUES THAT WE ARE ALL FACING. AND SO HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE THE ONLY DEAF MEMBER OF A BOARD HAS PROVIDED A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO GET UP AND SAY MY PIECE AND TALK ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES AND LANGUAGE ISSUES THAT PEOPLE OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY ARE FACING. AND AS A RESULT OF THAT, I REALLY DO THINK THAT THESE OTHER MEMBERS OF THESE BOARDS I HAVE BEEN ON HAVE DEVELOPED A HIGHER LEVEL OF RESPECT FOR OUR COMMUNITY AS A RESULT OF THE ADVOCACY I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THROUGH MY COMMITTEE WORK.

JUST CHECKING HERE WITH JANICE. ARE YOU DOING OKAY?
INTERPRETERS ARE OKAY?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU GUYS, BUT I NEED A DRINK. JANICE, DO YOU WANT A DRINK? OF WATER?

OKAY. SO I SUSPECT THAT GROWING UP, MOST OF YOU HERE IN THE CROWD HAVE HEARD SOME OF THESE SENTIMENTS THAT I HAVE UP HERE ON THE SLIDE. OH, YOU CAN'T DO THIS. OH, THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. YOU KNOW, THE POLICY SAYS. NO, YOU CAN'T. WELL, WE HAVE THIS LAW HERE THAT SAYS YOU CAN'T.

HAVE ANY OF YOU EXPERIENCED THAT? I MEAN, THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING, I THINK.

I THINK ALL OF US HERE HAVE HEARD THE WORD "NO" TOO MANY TIMES OR THAT WE CAN'T DO IT.

YOU KNOW, THE PATH OF SUCCESS IS QUITE OFTEN NOT THE PATH TAKEN BY DEAF INDIVIDUALS. WE'RE ALMOST LED DOWN THE PATH OF FAILURE.

IN CANADA, DID YOU KNOW THAT 80% OF DEAF INDIVIDUALS ARE UNEMPLOYED? BECAUSE OF THE SIMPLE FACT THAT PEOPLE HAVE TOLD THEM THAT THEY ARE FAILURES AND THEY CAN'T DO THIS AND THEY CAN'T DO THAT. YOU KNOW, THEY ALWAYS HAVE AN EXCUSE TO BACK THEM UP. WELL, POLICY SAYS THIS AND POLICY SAYS THAT. AND ESSENTIALLY THEY'RE JUST LEADING DEAF PEOPLE DOWN THE PATH TOWARDS FAILURE.

WHETHER OR NOT THE DEAF PERSON HAS THE APPROPRIATE TRAINING OR THE QUALIFICATIONS, THEY SEEM TO SORT OF DISMISS THAT. THEY JUST FOCUS ON YOU'RE DEAF. WELL, I'M SORRY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SUCCEED.

AS YOU KNOW, THERE OF COURSE ARE SOME DEAF PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE WHEN THE SALMON COME DOWN THE STREAM TO SPAWN. THERE'S HUNDREDS AND THOUSANDS OF THEM AND ONE OR TWO SORT OF BREAK

FREE FROM THE PACK AND GET AHEAD AND THEY ARE ABLE TO SPAWN AND ALL THE REST ARE LEFT BEHIND TO DIE. OR THEY'RE SCOOPED UP BY THE NETS OF THE FISHERMEN.

SO I WOULD SAY THE MAJORITY OF US HAVE EXPERIENCED BEING SCOOPED UP BY THE NETS OR LEFT BEHIND. AND IT'S A RARE SITUATION WHEN A DEAF PERSON CAN ACTUALLY GET AWAY, BREAK AWAY AND BE SUCCESSFUL.

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, DEAF PEOPLE ARE RELYING ON WELFARE. THEY -- BECAUSE OF THAT, IT CREATES SOCIAL ISSUES FOR THEM, RELATIONSHIP ISSUES. IT BECOMES A VERY VICIOUS CIRCLE. YOU KNOW, MAYBE THEY TURN TO ALCOHOL TO HELP THEM DEAL WITH THE SADNESS THAT THEY HAVE BECAUSE THEY HAVEN'T HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE SUCCESS.

AND I CAN SEE THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE HERE ARE PUTTING YOUR HANDS UP AND SAYING THAT YOU HAVE HAD THAT VERY SAME EXPERIENCE.

NOW, A PERSON FROM THE AUDIENCE JUST ASKED ABOUT MY STAT THAT I SAID 80% OF DEAF PEOPLE ARE UNEMPLOYED. THERE HAS BEEN RESEARCH DONE BY CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF, AND THEY FOUND THAT 80% ARE EITHER UNEMPLOYED OR UNDEREMPLOYED.

A SURVEY WAS ALSO DONE IN ONTARIO REGARDING THE EMPLOYMENT OF DEAF INDIVIDUALS, AND ESSENTIALLY THE SAME RESULTS WERE FOUND THERE.

AND YES -- AND THAT STAT APPLIES TO ALL OF CANADA, NOT JUST ONTARIO.

SO AT THE BOTTOM OF MY SLIDE HERE I HAVE A STATEMENT HERE SAYING THAT I WAS THE O OF THE X SOCIETY.

SO FOR US, DEAF INDIVIDUALS, QUITE OFTEN OUR EXPERIENCE IS THAT

WE ARE THE ONLY DEAF INDIVIDUAL WITHIN A HEARING GROUP. SO YOU AS THE DEAF PERSON IS THE O AND ALL THE HEARING PEOPLE ARE THE Xs, IN THAT THEY ARE THE MAJORITY. THEY ARE ALL THE SAME. THEY ARE ALL Xs.

NOW, THE SAME WOULD APPLY IF WE HAD ONE HEARING PERSON JOIN A LARGER GROUP OF DEAF PEOPLE. THE HEARING PERSON WOULD BE THE O WITHIN THE LARGER GROUP OF Xs, IF YOU SORT OF GET WHAT I'M SAYING HERE.

SO, I MEAN, LOT OF US HAVE THAT APPEARANCE WHERE WE ARE CONSTANTLY FIGHTING AGAINST THE LARGER MAJORITY. IT'S US AGAINST THEM. AND YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE VERY ALONE AND YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO RELY ON THE MAJORITY TO TEACH YOU, AND THEY TELL YOU THAT YOU ARE DIFFERENT OR UNIQUE OR SPECIAL OR EVEN NOT NORMAL. THESE ARE PHRASES THAT WE OFTEN HEAR GROWING UP BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN THE ONLY DEAF PERSON WITHIN THAT LARGER HEARING GROUP.

AND MORE OFTEN THAN NO, WE ACCEPTED THAT, WHAT THEY TOLD US.

BUT, YOU KNOW, ONCE I WENT TO GALLAUDET AND BECAME MORE INVOLVED IN THESE ORGANIZATIONS, I STARTED TO DEVELOP MORE OF A DEAF IDENTITY. I REALIZED, YOU KNOW WHAT, I AM NOT JUST AN X WITHIN THIS LARGER -- I'M NOT JUST AN O IN THIS LARGER GROUP OF Xs. I HAVE A LANGUAGE AND I'M PROUD OF IT, AND I'M PROUD OF WHO I AM, AND I'M PROUD OF MY DEAF IDENTITY.

I KNOW YOU GUYS PROBABLY HAVE THIS EXPERIENCE WITHIN YOUR OWN FAMILIES IF YOU ARE THE ONLY DEAF PERSON IN YOUR FAMILY.

ANYBODY EXPERIENCED THAT?

YOU ARE SITTING AT SUPPER WITH YOUR FAMILY AND THEY ARE ALL CHATTING AWAY AND YOU ARE SITTING THERE COMPLETELY OUT OF THE LOOP.

OR AT WORK, BREAK TIME. YOU GO SEE WHAT'S EVERYBODY ELSE TALKING ABOUT. THEY ARE ALL GIGGLING AND YOU SORT OF INQUIRE, OH, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, AND THEY GIVE YOU THIS SORT OF LOOK LIKE OH, IT'S OKAY, WE'LL TELL YOU LATER. IT'S NOT IMPORTANT. AND THEY REALLY EXCLUDE YOU.

OR PEOPLE GO OUT FOR LUNCH. HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED? MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, I HAVEN'T BEEN INVITED. HAVE ANY OF YOU EXPERIENCED THAT?

YOU KNOW, AGAIN, LIKE I SAID, WE'RE THE O AMONGST THIS LARGER GROUP OF Xs. WE'RE EXCLUDED IN ALL KINDS OF WAYS.

I WAS TOLD SO MANY TIMES GROWING UP THAT BECAUSE OF MY DEAFNESS I WAS LIMITED. YOU KNOW, I REMEMBER SAYING THAT I WANTED TO BE A FIREMAN WHEN I WAS A KID. AND MY TEACHER BASICALLY BAWLED ME OUT AND SAID ABSOLUTELY NOT, NO. YOU CAN'T.

AND I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND. AND THE TEACHER SAID, WELL, YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO HEAR TO BE A FIREMAN.

AND I THOUGHT WELL, OKAY. WELL, I WANT TO BE A POLICEMAN. NO, YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO HEAR.

IT DIDN'T MATTER WHAT I WANTED TO DO, MY DREAMS WERE, THEY SAID I COULDN'T DO IT BECAUSE OF MY DEAFNESS. AND THEY PUT THESE LIMITATIONS ON ME.

TODAY I THINK, I'M THE CEO OF THIS BIG ORGANIZATION, SO THERE. I WANT TO SHOW YOU. OF COURSE I TRY NOT TO DO THAT BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO TAKE THAT STANCE, BUT SOMETIMES THOSE NO'S KEEP COMING BACK IN MY MIND AND I FEEL I CAN'T, I CAN'T, AND I HAVE TO REMIND MYSELF I CAN AND I DO. IT'S ALMOST LIKE SLAVERY. YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE FREED, BUT YOU ARE NEVER REALLY FREED FROM IT. IT'S ALWAYS THERE

WITH YOU IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND.

IT'S AN ETERNAL THING THAT YOU CAN NEVER GET RID OF. YOU CAN NEVER WASH IT AWAY AND GET RID OF IT. IT'S ALWAYS THERE, STUCK IN YOUR BRAIN.

AND YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE TO REALLY CONSCIOUSLY DECIDE THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO LET THOSE OLD EXPERIENCES FROM THE PAST INFILTRATE YOUR MIND AND AFFECT WHAT YOU ARE DOING DAY TO DAY, ALL THE HARD WORK THAT YOU ARE DOING.

NOW, HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE HEARD THE STATISTICS ABOUT DEAF PEOPLE WRITING OR READING AT A GRADE 2, GRADE 3 LEVEL?

ALL OF US.

YOU KNOW, I'M 45 YEARS OLD, AND I STILL SEE THE COMMENTS BEING MADE OR THE STATEMENTS BEING MADE, OH, IN GENERAL DEAF PEOPLE HAVE A LOW LITERACY RATE. GRADE 3, GRADE 4. WHERE IN THE HELL DO THEY GET THAT INFORMATION? FROM THE 40s, 50s?

AND SADLY ENOUGH, DEAF PEOPLE THEMSELVES IDENTIFY WITH THAT. WE'RE DEAF. IT'S HARD FOR US TO READ AND WRITE. IT'S A CHALLENGE.

I SEE THAT OFTEN. AND WHEN I SEE A DEAF PERSON SAY THAT ABOUT THEMSELVES, I -- I SAY, DON'T USE THAT AS AN EXCUSE. YOU NEED TO STAND UP AND PROVE THAT STATEMENT TO BE WRONG, TO BE FALSE.

YOU NEED TO STAND UP AND ENCOURAGE LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND TAKE THAT UPON YOURSELVES AS WELL.

AM I RIGHT?

SOMETHING ELSE THAT WE WERE TOLD: THAT USING AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE, USING OUR LANGUAGE LIMITS OUR ABILITY TO SUCCEED.

HOW MANY OF YOU HEARD OF THOSE STORIES, A DEAF PERSON WANTING TO GO IN AND GET A JOB AND THEY WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY CAN

PRACTICE, THAT THEY HAVE GOT SPEECH, THAT THEY CAN FIT IN USING THEIR SPEECH BECAUSE THEY ARE SO AFRAID TO USE THEIR LANGUAGE, FEARFUL OF BEING PUNISHED, FEARFUL OF LOSING THEIR JOBS.

AND I HAVE MET MANY A DEAF PERSON WHO HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS BECAUSE THEY HAVE USED THEIR LANGUAGE IN THEIR PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT.

AND THIS STEMS FROM THE EXPERIENCES THAT WE HAVE ALL HAD IN SCHOOL, WHERE WE GOT THESE EVIL EYES FROM THE TEACHER WHEN WE WERE CAUGHT SIGNING AND WE WERE ENCOURAGED TO ONLY USE TOTAL COMMUNICATION OR USE A DIFFERENT MODE.

THERE WAS ONE INDIVIDUAL WHO BECAME A TEACHER AND WAS ALWAYS -- I WAS VERY FASCINATED BY THIS PERSON. HE WAS A STORYTELLER. HE COULD INCORPORATE EVERYTHING AND PRESENT THE INFORMATION IN SUCH A VISUAL WAY ELECTRIFYING.

OFTEN WE WOULD HEAR THE DOOR SMASH, CLOSE SHUT QUICKLY, THE WINDOWS COMING DOWN. AND AFTER YEARS AND YEARS LATER, I ALWAYS SAID TO THIS GENTLEMAN, YOU KNOW, YOU WERE THE BEST TEACHER I EVER HAD. YOU WERE THE BEST STORYTELLER EVER.

AND HE SAID, DO YOU REMEMBER ONCE IN A WHILE WHEN THE DOOR WOULD SLAM SHUT OR THE WINDOW WOULD SLAM?

I SAID YEAH, WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING? THE TEACHER THAT WAS OPPOSED TO USING SIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM WAS THE ONE COMING DOWN THE HALLWAY SLAMMING THAT DOOR SHUT.

HE WAS ASHAMED, ASHAMED THAT WE WERE USING SIGN LANGUAGE.

THAT'S SO UNFORTUNATE.

YOU KNOW, WHEN I LOOK BACK, IS IT ANY BETTER TODAY? TRULY, IS IT ANY BETTER TODAY?

UNFORTUNATELY NOT.

YOU KNOW, I WAS WORKING AT THE OFFICE AT CHS AND I NEEDED TO GO SEE SOMEBODY, SO I WENT DOWN TO THE MAIN FLOOR, AND I SAW A LITTLE GROUP OF KIDS. YOU KNOW, THEY CAME IN FOR A TOUR FROM THEIR SCHOOL. AND THE KIDS WERE SO THRILLED AND EXCITED TO BE THERE. SO I SAW THEM AND I SAID OH, I HAVE GOT TO GO SAY HELLO. I WENT UP AND SAID HI, HOW ARE YOU, AND SIGNED TO THEM. AND THEY ALL RESPONDED VERBALLY. THEY USED THEIR ORAL SKILLS. AND I THOUGHT, WHAT DO I DO? I'M THE CEO, THE PRESIDENT OF CHS, AND I AM FUMING THAT THESE CHILDREN ARE NOT USING SIGN. BUT THEY'RE NOT ALLOWED TO SIGN.

SO I THOUGHT, OKAY, I'M GOING TO -- I WENT UP TO MY OFFICE, TOOK A MINUTE, CAME BACK DOWN. CAME UP TO THE KIDS AND SAID, HI, AGAIN. AND SAID, THIS BUILDING IS YOUR FREEDOM. THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE YOU ARE FREE TO EXPRESS HOW YOU WANT TO EXPRESS. AND DID YOU KNOW THAT I'M THE CEO OF THIS ORGANIZATION?

AND THEY RESPONDED USING SIGN, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED TO SEE. SO WE BEGAN A CONVERSATION. WE TALKED TO EACH OTHER BACK AND FORTH. AND THEY SAID, YOU'RE DEAF? YOU CAN BE THE CEO?

ABSOLUTELY.

AND WHY NOT?

WE'RE IN THE YEAR 2011.

AND I MEAN, SO THIS JUST HAPPENED, JUST HAPPENED. SO WE STILL HAVE A LOT OF WORK, A LONG WAY TO GO.

EVEN MY OWN FAMILY AND FRIENDS, SADLY TO SAY, WOULD QUESTION. WILL BRADEN GO TO AN ORAL SCHOOL? AND I THOUGHT, WHY? I SUPPOSE I WOULD ENCOURAGE THAT SKILL IF HE HAS THE SKILL AND THE POTENTIAL.

BUT WHY? YOU KNOW, DO YOU LOOK AT ME AS SOMEBODY WHO DIDN'T SUCCEED OR AS A FAILURE BECAUSE I USE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE?

YOU KNOW, SHE STAMMERED, WELL, NO. NO, NO, NO, BUT MY FAMILY AND MY FRIENDS ARE STILL EMBEDDED WITH THE IDEA OF WHAT SOCIETY HAS IMPLANTED IN THEIR MINDS, THAT DEAF PEOPLE CAN'T SUCCEED.

IT'S VERY DISCONCERTING FOR ME AND HEARTBREAKING FOR ME TO KNOW THAT MY OWN MOTHER STILL HAS THAT THOUGHT. BUT I NEED TO LOOK AT THE POSITIVE. I NEED TO SAY, I CAN TAKE THIS AND I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND MAKE A CHANGE.

BRADEN AND I HAVE VERY MUCH THE SAME CHARACTERISTICS. I HOPE THAT DOESN'T SCARE YOU AWAY.

BUT HE IS ASSERTIVE. IN HIS MIND, HE IS NOT DONE UNTIL HE KNOWS WHAT IT IS THAT HE'S LOOKING TO KNOW. SO VERY, VERY INTERESTING TO WATCH HIM AT WORK.

AND I WANT TO SEE MORE DEAF CHILDREN BE LIKE HIM. HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED APPROACHING A HEARING PERSON AND YOU GESTURE TO YOUR EAR AND SAY, I'M DEAF. I THINK MOST OF YOU SHOULD BE PUTTING YOUR HANDS UP NOW. COME ON. I KNOW WE'VE ALL DONE IT.

AND I'VE DONE IT. I'LL ADMIT.

BUT I'LL HAVE TO ALSO ADMIT THAT I'M ASHAMED WHEN I DO IT. BECAUSE I'M GIVING THE PERSON THAT SPEAKING TO THE WRONG MESSAGE. I'M IMPLYING THAT I'M UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM, THAT AS A DEAF INDIVIDUAL I MAY NOT BE AS INTELLIGENT AS THEY ARE.

I FEEL MUCH BETTER WHEN I FORCE THE CONVERSATION, WHEN I ENCOURAGE THE CONVERSATION BY SHOWING THEM THAT I CAN COMMUNICATE IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. JUST BECAUSE I'M DEAF DOESN'T MEAN THAT I'M LIMITED IN BEING ABLE TO TALK WITH THAT INDIVIDUAL.

DREAMS AND HIGH HOPES. THOSE WERE THE OTHER THINGS THAT WE WERE LIMITED. WE WEREN'T ENCOURAGED TO HAVE THEM.

AND SO HERE WE ARE. HOW MANY OF YOU REMEMBER THE RALLY, THE PROTEST IN 1988, THE DEAF PRESIDENT NOW?

HOW MANY OF YOU WERE THERE?

FANTASTIC. YOU'RE VETS. HMM.

THE ONLY THING IS YOU DON'T HAVE A MEDAL TO SHOW IT. YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN A MEDAL. MAYBE ANNUALLY WE SHOULD GIVE OUT MEDALS.

THE DEAF PRESIDENT NOW RALLY TRULY ROCKED THE WORLD.

THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD, JANE BASSETT SPILMAN, EVEN KNOWING THAT DEAF APPLICANTS WERE COMING IN TO APPLY TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF GALLAUDET, THAT WAS RIGHT AWAY HER CONCERN.

AND AT THE TIME, YOU KNOW, I WASN'T REALLY CONCERNED THAT WE HAD A HEARING PRESIDENT. IT DIDN'T REALLY BOTHER ME, WHETHER IT WAS DEAF OR HEARING. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME A WOMAN WAS APPLYING TO BE PRESIDENT, SO THAT WAS, I GUESS, HISTORICAL.

BUT THIS MOVEMENT WAS EARTH-SHATTERING. IT REALLY RESONATED WITH THE ENTIRE DEAF COMMUNITY INTERNATIONALLY.

HERE IS A PICTURE OF JERRY COVELL. MANY OF YOU KNOW HIM. TRULY AN INSPIRATIONAL LEADER. AND HE WASN'T A LEADER IN THE SENSE OF BEING A LEADER ON A DAILY BASIS. HE WOULD JUST BE IN THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT. HE HAD SOME TYPE OF ELECTRIC MAGNITUDE, A CHARISMA ABOUT HIM.

AND AT THE RALLY THERE WAS THIS LITTLE STEEL PLATFORM. YOU KNOW, I PAID ATTENTION TO HIM ABOUT 50% OF THE TIME WHEN HE WAS SPEAKING. BUT WHAT I REALLY WAS AMAZED BY WAS JUST HOW HE

MANOEUVRED BACK AND FORTH ON THIS TINY LITTLE PLATFORM. I THOUGHT GEE, SOMEBODY IS REALLY WATCHING OUT FOR HIM.

BUT HE WAS MAGNIFYING. HE SHARED HIS CONCERN. HE WANTED US TO PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT WAS HAPPENING. HE GAVE US THE ELECTRIC MAGNETISM THAT WE NEEDED TO GET GOING. HE INSPIRED US.

HE SHOWED US THAT WE NEEDED TO STOP ACCEPTING WHAT WAS BEING DONE FOR US.

AND OF COURSE ONE OF THE BONUSES OF THE RALLY WAS THAT THE SCHOOL WAS CLOSED AND WE DIDN'T HAVE TO FOCUS ON DOING ANY HOMEWORK AND WHATNOT.

BUT HE WAS THE CATALYST FOR US TO GET THE MOVEMENT GOING. HE PUT THE SPURS OUT.

IT TRULY WAS A VICTORY FOR ALL WHO FELT THAT SUFFRAGE OF BEING STEREOTYPED, BEING LABELED, DEVALUED, AND TRULY BEING UNREPRESENTED.

HE CONVINCED US AND SHOWED US THAT WE REALLY WERE A UNIQUE GROUP AND THAT WE WERE NOT BEING REPRESENTED THE WAY WE NEEDED TO BE REPRESENTED.

JUST LIKE THE REV JESSE JACKSON, A LEADER IN THE 60s. I HAVE A DREAM. HE WAS A CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER. MARTIN LUTHER KING. OH, I LOVE THAT GUY. I READ HIS BOOK, HIS BIOGRAPHY.

IF YOU EVER HAVE A CHANCE TO READ HIS BOOK, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO IT.

I HAVE A DREAM. THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.

AT THE GALLAUDET PROTEST, WE USED THE SAME QUOTE. THAT WAS -- WE TOOK IT FROM THE 1960s, AND IT ALLOWED US TO SPEAK OUT.

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE HAIR RISING ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECKS

RIGHT NOW?

I HAVE GIVEN THIS SPEECH A HUNDRED TIMES, AND I STILL SHIVER WHEN I TALK ABOUT IT.

SO THE QUESTION IS WHAT HAPPENED TO JERRY COVELL NOW? WHERE IS HE NOW.

SADLY, I DON'T KNOW. HE'S SOMEWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES. I DON'T KNOW. BUT I REALLY DO WISH ALL THE BEST FOR HIM BECAUSE HE SHOOK THE EARTH FOR US. HE GOT US MOTIVATED AND GOT US GOING. THAT'S ALL I CAN SAY ABOUT HIM. HE'S A GOOD GUY.

SO FROM AS FAR BACK AS YOU CAN THINK TO TODAY IN THIS MOMENT OF TIME, LET'S TAKE A SNAPSHOT OF WHERE WE'RE AT.

HOW MANY HERE ARE STUDENTS HERE RIGHT NOW? DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS?

(BANGING NOISE).

ARE YOU STILL STRUGGLING FOR ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION, OR ARE YOU FINDING THAT IT'S BEAUTIFULLY WONDERFUL FOR YOU?

YES, YOU ARE.

AND YOU? STRUGGLING?

TRYING TO FIND WORK, BUT IN SCHOOL YOU THOUGHT IT WAS GOOD. EVERYTHING WAS WONDERFUL. YOU HAD ACCESS TO EVERYTHING.

IT WAS A CHALLENGE, RIGHT? SO YOU STRUGGLED.

WHO ELSE?

IT'S REALLY SAD THAT WE'RE STILL STRUGGLING FOR ACCESS, TO EQUAL ACCESS IN A CLASSROOM SETTING.

WHAT ABOUT EMPLOYMENT, HIGHER EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES? WE STILL GO THROUGH THE BARRIERS. THE OPTIONS AREN'T THERE FOR US.

CAPTIONING IS ANOTHER ONE. WELL, LET ME JUST SAY, I THANK YOU

FOR INVITING ME TO ALBERTA. BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ONTARIO RIGHT NOW, PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS?

I HAVE NEVER MISSED A DEBATE FOR THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS. NEVER. I MUST BE THERE WATCHING IT ON TV WITH THE CAPTIONING, WATCHING WHAT EACH ELECTORAL CANDIDATE HAS TO SAY. I NEVER HAVE MISSED.

AND I'M VERY HAPPY TO BE HERE. I'VE ENJOYED THE EVENTS THAT I'VE ATTENDED, BUT I'VE NEVER MISSED THE DEBATES. SO I'M REALLY CURIOUS TO FIND THE OUTCOMES. SO I TEXTED GARY AND ASKED HIM WHAT'S GOING ON. AND HE SAID, OF COURSE, ONE OF THE GUYS DID A FANTASTIC JOB. YOU KNOW, SO ON THE INTERNET EVERYTHING IS UP AND IT'S READY, SO I'VE LOOKED FOR THAT INFORMATION, BUT IT'S NOT CAPTIONED.

SO AGAIN, I'M LOCKED OUT.

SO SPEAKING ABOUT CAPTIONING, MANY OF US DON'T RECEIVE ENOUGH. IN COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY SETTINGS.

YOU CAN'T HAVE BOTH. WE CAN ONLY OFFER YOU ONE, SO YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE. SO YOU CAN HAVE CART SERVICES OR INTERPRETING SERVICES. BUT IT'S YOUR CHOICE.

BUT YOU CAN'T HAVE THESE SERVICES IN ALL THE COURSES THAT YOU HAVE. YOU CAN'T HAVE INTERPRETERS IN EVERY SINGLE COURSE OR CART PROVISIONS IN EVERY SINGLE COURSE. SO WE'RE STILL SEEING THOSE BARRIERS IN FRONT OF US.

VIDEO RELAY SERVICE. MANY OF YOU CAME UP TO ME LAST NIGHT ASKING ME ABOUT THAT. MY SHOULDER IS A BIT SORE THIS MORNING WITH ALL OF THOSE QUESTIONS.

BUT THE CONCERN IS THAT WESTERN CANADA MAY NOT BE ABLE TO

CONTINUE TO PROVIDE VIDEO RELAY SERVICES. AND WHO MAKES THAT DECISION?

THE GOVERNMENT. THE PEOPLE. THE Xs, THE LARGER SOCIETY. AND IT'S THE Os, IT'S THE SMALLER GROUPS WHO SUFFER.

SO WE LOSE ACCESS TO A VISUAL FORM OF COMMUNICATION THAT HAS BEEN SUCH A FANTASTIC FEATURE TO HAVE. HAVE TO GO BACK TO TEXTING OR LIMITED ACCESS.

OFTEN WHEN I GO AROUND IN MY TRAVELS TO GIVE PRESENTATIONS, IN MY GUT, I TRY TO REMEMBER DON'T SAY THAT WE'RE A DEAF ...

I AM SO PROUD TO BE PART OF A LINGUISTIC COMMUNITY, PROUD OF MY LANGUAGE, PROUD OF BEING PART OF MY COMMUNITY AS A DEAF INDIVIDUAL. BUT WHEN I SEE ALL OF THOSE Xs OUT THERE AND I'M THE ONLY O, AND I KNOW THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND LINGUISTICS, I KNOW THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND MY CULTURE, OUR CULTURE, IT'S A CHALLENGE. BUT WE HAVE TO GET OUT THERE AND TRY TO OPEN THE MINDS OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS.

WE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL WAGES, AND A LOT OF US DIDN'T REALIZE THAT THIS WAS AN ISSUE, BUT IT TRULY IS. MANY DEAF INDIVIDUALS DO NOT EARN ON PAR AS THEIR HEARING PEERS OR HEARING COLLEAGUES.

EQUALITY AND RESPECT IS SOMETHING ELSE WE STILL ARE TRYING TO RECEIVE. SOME PEOPLE COME TO ME AND SAY PLEASE GO BACK TO CHS, PLEASE COME BACK TO HAMILTON, PLEASE COME BACK AND BE THE PRESIDENT OF OAD AGAIN. THERE IS NOT ENOUGH LEADERS. THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN THERE HAVE BEEN THERE TOO LONG THAT WE HAVE BURNED OURSELVES OUT. THEN THEY DISAPPEAR, AND WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

SO WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT WE ARE ENCOURAGING OTHER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY TO BE OUR LEADERS COMING IN BEHIND US.

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE SEEN BRAVEHEART? IT IS A FANTASTIC MOVIE.

I LOVE THAT MOVIE.

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF THAT MOVIE?

WHEN THE GUY DOES THAT, RIGHT? WHEN HE LIFTS HIS SKIRT AND MOONS.

FOR FREEDOM. RIGHT? TO BE FREE.

YOU KNOW, LOOK AT THE DEAF COMMUNITY. WE DON'T WANT TO COME OUT GUNS A-BLAZING, BUT WE WANT TO ADVOCATE. WE WANT TO STAND UP FOR OUR RIGHTS. WE WANT TO FIGHT FOR THE FREEDOMS THAT WE DESERVE.

IT SEEMS THAT WE STRUGGLE TO COME UP AGAINST THE SYSTEM, THE POLICY MAKERS.

WE'RE NOT LIKE THAT, BUT WE WANT TO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AT THE SAME LEVEL. SO WE NEED TO -- IT TAKES A GROUP OF US. WE NEED TO COME TOGETHER AND COLLABORATE, AND WE CAN FIGHT THE SYSTEM TOGETHER. BUT OFTEN WHAT HAPPENS IS THAT THOSE GROUPS COME TOGETHER AND THEN THEY FALL APART, AND THEY COME BACK TOGETHER AND THEN THEY FALL APART. WE NEED TO STAY TOGETHER.

NOW, COMING HERE TO ALBERTA, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR 911 SYSTEM IS LIKE. I SUSPECT ALL ACROSS CANADA IT'S THE SAME. YOU PICK UP THE PHONE, YOU DIAL 911 AND THERE IS A HEARING OPERATOR. WHICH DOESN'T HAVE HELP ANY OF US.

SO I NEED TO LET THE MINISTRY KNOW THAT THIS SYSTEM IS NOT WORKING FOR US AND THAT WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE OUR PERSONAL INFORMATION TO 911 OPERATORS SO THAT WE CAN GET THE HELP THAT WE NEED WHEN WE'RE CALLING THAT NUMBER.

YOU KNOW, IF A HEARING PERSON PHONES 911, IT'S ALMOST LIKE THEY AUTOMATICALLY KNOW THAT THERE'S A FIRE OR WHATNOT AND THE WHOLE BRIGADE IS SENT TO THEIR HOME.

OH, INTERPRETER ERROR. IF A DEAF PERSON PHONES AND THEY FIGURE OUT THERE'S A FIRE, THE ENTIRE BRIGADE COMES, INCLUDING THE POLICE.

SO WHY ARE THE POLICE COMING TO MY HOME AND NOT COMING TO OTHER PEOPLE'S HOMES?

IF, FOR INSTANCE, I HAVE A SITUATION WHERE SOMEONE IS CHOKING IN MY HOME, THE POLICE ARE SENT.

IN ONTARIO WE HAVE A SYSTEM WHERE WE CAN FILL OUT SOME INFORMATION TO PROVIDE OUR MINISTRIES WITH WHAT OUR NEEDS ARE AS DEAF INDIVIDUALS. SO ACCESS TO EMERGENCY IS A VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE FOR A DEAF INDIVIDUAL THAN IT IS FOR A HEARING INDIVIDUAL. AND SERVICES THAT ARE SENT TO EACH HOUSE ARE VERY DIFFERENT. SO IF I NEEDED SERVICES FOR MY SON WHO IS CHOKING, I MAY NOT GET THOSE SERVICES BECAUSE THEY JUST SENT A POLICE OFFICER TO FIND OUT WHAT THE EMERGENCY IS AND THEN THEY DISPATCH FOR THE APPROPRIATE EMERGENCY SERVICES. SO IT'S NOT VERY -- THE SYSTEM ISN'T PREPARED TO DEAL WITH OUR NEEDS.

SO VISUAL FIRE ALARMS, I THINK, ARE AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR DEAF PEOPLE TO HAVE.

THEY DON'T HAVE THEM IN HOTEL ROOMS. SO, YOU KNOW, IT WOULD BE NICE IF WE HAD SOME SORT OF SIGNAL FOR US TO KNOW THAT IF THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY WE WOULD KNOW WHAT TO DO.

AND THANKFULLY FOR CAD, THEY LET HOTELS KNOW THAT IF I'M STAYING THERE THAT I AM DEAF AND I DO NEED A DIFFERENT WAY OF GETTING INFORMATION TO ME IF THERE IS AN EMERGENCY.

BUT THAT'S NOT COMMON PRACTICE.

SO JUST OUT OF CURIOSITY, HOW MANY DEAF PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY IN THE CROWD TONIGHT? AND HOW MANY HEARING PEOPLE ARE IN THE CROWD

TONIGHT?

COME ON. STICK YOUR HANDS UP THERE, HEARING PEOPLE. DON'T BE SHY.

WELL, GUESS WHAT. TONIGHT THE Xs ARE THE DEAF PEOPLE, AND THE HEARING PEOPLE ARE THE Os.

SO THAT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT THAN THE NORM.

SO I KNOW THAT AS DEAF PEOPLE OFTEN WHEN WE GET INVOLVED WE THINK, I KNOW MY RIGHTS. I KNOW MY RIGHTS TO ACCESS AND WHATNOT. SO THEN I GO TO A PLACE, BUT I STILL FEEL LIKE I'M SORT OF FIGHTING OR I'M SORT OF STRUGGLING FOR EQUAL ACCESS.

AND I THINK WITHIN MYSELF AS A DEAF INDIVIDUAL, I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. BUT YET I STILL FEEL THAT LIMITATIONS ARE PLACED ON ME OR I FEEL SOMEWHAT POWERLESS BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE THAT ARE THERE AND I'M FEARFUL OF GOING INTO A SITUATION BECAUSE I'M THE ONLY DEAF PERSON.

SO DESPITE HOW I FEEL INSIDE, ON THE OUTSIDE I STILL FEEL THAT I HAVE LIMITATIONS.

THE PERSON DOESN'T EVEN HAVE TO BE DEAF. IT COULD BE SOMEBODY WHO MAYBE HAS DEAF PARENTS IS AND IS VERY COMFORTABLE IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY, USES AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE. THAT INDIVIDUAL ALSO MAY FEEL LIMITED WHEN THEY'RE FACED WITH THE Xs, A GROUP OF Xs. CAN THEY MAKE A DIFFERENCE? CAN THEY PLANT THE SEED TO ENCOURAGE CHANGE?

AND OFTEN WE FEEL THAT WE CAN'T. WE'RE FEARFUL THAT MIGHT COME OF IT, THE RAMIFICATIONS TO MYSELF OR TO ANYBODY ELSE.

AND SO IT'S A STRUGGLE. IT'S AN ONGOING STRUGGLE.

EVEN FOR MYSELF, I HAVE TRIED TO FIGURE OUT, HOW CAN I GET

THROUGH THIS SYSTEM? HOW CAN I -- I KIND OF JUST PLAYED ALONG AND PLAYED THE GAME. I WAS NEVER NEGATIVE IN THE SENSE OF PUTTING DOWN MEMBERS OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY OR MY COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS.

BUT NOW, AS THE CEO, NOW AS THE PRESIDENT, YOU WATCH ME ROAR.

(Applause)

I'M GOING TO STAND UP, AND I'M GOING TO SHOW INDIVIDUALS THAT WE CAN DO IT.

AND IT'S UNFORTUNATELY MY -- THROUGH MY EXPERIENCES, YOU KNOW, I COULDN'T CRITICIZE ANYBODY IN THIS ROOM BECAUSE I'VE BEEN THERE. I'VE DONE THE VERY SAME THINGS.

SO MY THOUGHTS, MY POSITIONS, AND MY ACTIONS HAVE SOMETIMES BEEN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE LARGER SOCIETY, AND I'VE NOT DONE WHAT I WANTED TO DO.

HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE ALWAYS FELT SUBORDINATE? BELOW?

HOW MANY OF YOU FELT EQUAL, ON PAR WITH YOUR PEERS?

I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE, AND I BELIEVE WE CAN. BECAUSE WE HAVE A DREAM TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. BUT TO MAKE IT HAPPEN, WE ALL NEED TO WORK TOGETHER. WE ALL NEED TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER AND COME AT THIS FROM A TEAM APPROACH.

DO ANY OF YOU EVER FEEL SORT OF GUILTY FOR REQUESTING SERVICES THAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO ACCESS? YOU KNOW, AT YOUR WORKPLACE, IF YOU NEED AN INTERPRETER BUT YOU HEAR IT'S COSTLY, IT'S NOT PART OF OUR BUDGET. BUT YOU KNOW THAT YOU DESERVE TO HAVE EQUAL ACCESS AS EVERYBODY ELSE AT YOUR JOB PLACE. SO YOU FEEL GUILTY FOR EVEN ASKING.

YOU ALSO WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT IT'S NOT JUST SERVICES FOR YOU. IT'S ACTUALLY SERVICES FOR EVERYBODY INVOLVED. IT'S NOT JUST AN

INTERPRETER FOR YOU, THE DEAF PERSON. EVERYBODY IS RELYING ON THAT INTERPRETER IF YOU'RE ALL GOING TO THE MEETING TOGETHER IN ORDER TO ENABLE COMMUNICATION.

SO SOMETIMES WHEN YOU EXPLAIN THAT TO HEARING PEOPLE -- EXCUSE ME. SOMETIMES WHEN I GO TO A MEETING, I WILL TELL THE HEARING PEOPLE, OH, THIS PERSON IS YOUR INTERPRETER. AND THEY BECOME VERY CONFUSED AND WONDER, WELL, I DON'T NEED AN INTERPRETER. THEN THEY SLOWLY START TO REALIZE THAT THEY ARE AS DEPENDENT ON THAT PERSON AS I AM TO COMMUNICATE.

SO AS INTERPRETERS, THEY ARE NOT INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF. THEY ARE INTERPRETERS FOR EVERYBODY AND ANYBODY THAT IS IN THAT SITUATION OR IN THAT ROOM. WE ARE ALL RELYING ON THE SERVICES OF THAT INTERPRETER TO ENSURE ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION.

DO YOU EVER FEEL THAT THE POSITION THAT YOU'RE IN IS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF OTHERS? I KNOW THAT FOR ME, OFTEN CONVERSATIONS THAT I'VE HAD WITH MY SON WHERE HE'S BEING VERY ASSERTIVE AND TRYING TO ACCESS INFORMATION FOR HIMSELF, AT TIMES I'VE HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH MY SON ABOUT WHAT HE'S ACCOMPLISHED AT SCHOOL. AND OFTEN HE'S COMING AT IT FROM -- HE'S LOOKING FOR HIS RIGHTS. HE'S WANTING TO FIGHT FOR HIS RIGHTS AS AN INDIVIDUAL, AND HE'S RAISED A LITTLE BIT OF HAVOC AT SCHOOL. THE PRINCIPAL WILL CALL ME IN. CAN I SEE YOU ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE? I'VE GONE IN AND OFTEN I'VE FELT A LITTLE BIT LIKE A JELLYFISH, I HAVE TO ADMIT. MY SON HAS A RIGHT TO FIGHT FOR HIS RIGHTS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE NEEDS TO KNOW HOW TO DO IT IN THE RIGHT WAY.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN YOU MEET PEOPLE OUT IN THE COMMUNITY WHO ARE MAYBE CONSIDERED DIFFERENT TO EVERYBODY ELSE? DO YOU

PERCEIVE THOSE PEOPLE AS AN O WITHIN A LARGER X GROUP?

MUCH LIKE HOW WE PERCEIVE OURSELVES?

YOU KNOW, I THINK WE NEED TO REALIZE THAT YES, WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND THAT WE ALL ARE PART OF A LARGER GROUP AND WE'RE GOING TO BE DIFFERENT AND WE NEED TO BE OPEN TO THAT DIVERSITY.

WE JUST HOSTED A DONOR APPRECIATION NIGHT RECENTLY WHERE WE HAD A LOT OF PEOPLE COME, A LOT OF SPECIAL GUESTS. WE INVITED LUKE ADAMS, AND HE IS A -- HE'S BEEN INVOLVED IN THE AMAZING RACE TWO TIMES, I THINK. IS ANYBODY HERE A FAN OF THAT SHOW?

WELL, HE'S BEEN INVOLVED IN THAT SHOW TWICE, AND HE ACTUALLY HAS A DEAF MOTHER. I'M SORRY, HE'S DEAF. AND HIS MOTHER IS HIS TEAMMATE ON THE SHOW.

BUT WHAT'S INTERESTING IS ANY TIME THEY GIVE AN INTERVIEW, THEY'RE SO FOCUSED ON THE FACT THAT HE'S DEAF THAT THAT'S THE ONLY THING THEY ASK HIM ABOUT. AND SO HE SORT OF THINKS, WHY ARE YOU SO INTERESTED IN MY HEARING LOSS? WHY AREN'T YOU ASKING ME ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE? THERE'S A LOT MORE TO ME THAN JUST THAT, THAT I'M DEAF.

WHEN WE INVITED HIM TO COME AND SPEAK, THERE WERE THREE GROUPS AT CHS THAT TRULY BROKE DOWN FROM THE MESSAGE THAT LUKE HAD TO SHARE WITH THEM. I DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH KLEENEX BOXES, I THINK, FOR THEM.

YOU KNOW LUKE AS A DEAF CHILD GREW UP AND HAD SPECIFIC EXPERIENCES AND SHARED THESE EXPERIENCES WITH THESE PARENTS, THESE GROUPS OF PARENTS. AND OFTEN BASICALLY WHAT HE HAD TO SAY WAS HE WAS NEVER INCLUDED. HE WAS LEFT ALONE. HE WAS ISOLATED. HE

COULDN'T -- YOU KNOW, THE COMMUNICATION WASN'T THERE.

AND THEY LOOKED BACK AND PARENTS NOW REGRET SOME OF THE CHOICES THAT THEY MADE, REGRET HOW THEY RELATED TO THEIR CHILD, WHAT THEY COULDN'T GIVE THEM OR DIDN'T GIVE THEM.

AND SO, YOU KNOW, I WANT TO REMIND PARENTS THAT IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION WITH YOUR DEAF SON OR DAUGHTER. MAKE THE CONNECTION WITH THEM. TELL THEM THAT YOU'RE SORRY. START NEW, START A FRESH EXPERIENCE WITH THEM. AND SO MANY OF THOSE PARENTS REALIZE, OKAY, I CAN DO THAT.

AND I DID GET AN E-MAIL FROM ONE OF THE MOTHERS A COUPLE DAYS LATER. AND TRULY IT WAS A VERY EMOTIONAL E-MAIL. SHE WENT AND MET WITH HER DAUGHTER, AND SHE SPOKE WITH HER ABOUT THE REGRETS THAT SHE HAD. AND THE DAUGHTER SAID, FINALLY. FINALLY THEY UNDERSTAND WHAT MY EXPERIENCE WAS LIKE.

SO LUKE WAS A HUGE IMPACT ON THESE PARENTS, HAVING HIM COME AND SHARE HIS EXPERIENCES AS A DEAF CHILD AND EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD GONE THROUGH.

YOU KNOW, WE DON'T WANT TO BLAME. THERE'S NO SENSE OF BLAME. BUT IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START A NEW CHAPTER AND TO MAKE THE CHANGES AND IMPROVE THAT RELATIONSHIP.

SO BREAKING THE CYCLE. CERTAINLY MEANING GET INVOLVED, BE THE INFLUENCE, STAND TOGETHER, BE STRONG TOGETHER. DON'T PLOW AHEAD AS AN ARMY AND THEN LEAVE YOUR FELLOW MATES. BE TOGETHER. FIGHT FOR THE SAME GOAL AND IT DOESN'T ONLY HAVE TO BE JUST DEAF PEOPLE IN THAT FIGHT. ALLIES, OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, HEARING INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT OUR GOALS. IT CAN BE A VERY POWERFUL GROUP.

BE HONEST WITH EACH OTHER. PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT TO EACH

OTHER.

AND HONESTLY, AS A DEAF PERSON, I'VE LOOKED -- I'VE SEEN NEGATIVE MEDIA ALWAYS. THE FIRST PAGE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED. HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED THAT?

IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT THE BAD STUFF. WHY DON'T WE HAVE A VERY UPLIFTING, POSITIVE, ENLIGHTENING STORY ON THE FRONT PAGE? IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT THE NEGATIVE STUFF.

WE NEED TO LOOK AT HOW WE DO THAT IN OUR OWN COMMUNITIES, HOW WE FOCUS TYPICALLY ON THE NEGATIVE. LET'S CHANGE THAT FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE. THE POSITIVE IS WHAT GIVES US ENERGY.

WE ALL SAW LEONARDA, WHO WAS HERE ON MONDAY NIGHT, GAVE US A LESSON IN YOGA. THAT WAS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE TO INCREASE OUR MOTIVATIONS, OUR PASSIONS OUR DESIRES. IF WE CAN TAKE THAT INTO OUR EVERYDAY LIVES, WE WILL BE ALL THE BETTER FOR IT.

DON'T CONSIDER POLICIES AS BARRIERS.

LOOK AT THEM AND LET'S TRY TO MAKE CHANGES TO REMOVE THOSE POLICIES THAT ARE BARRIERS.

FIND THE PEOPLE THAT CAN HELP YOU MAKE THE CHANGES, AND MOVE FORWARD TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES HAPPEN.

ADVOCATING IS ANOTHER BIG THING. YOU KNOW, REALLY, WE CAN'T SAY YEAH, WELL, IT'S TOO BAD. TOO BAD ABOUT THAT. SORRY ABOUT YOUR LUCK. HOPE IT WORKS OUT FOR YOU BETTER NEXT TIME.

BE THAT EXTENDED HELPING HAND. WORK WITH YOUR COMMUNITIES. WORK WITH YOUR PEERS AND COLLEAGUES. HELP THEM BE SUCCESSFUL.

LET'S GET RID OF THE CROWD THEORY. WE ALL KNOW WHAT CROWD THEORY IS. SOMETIMES INDIVIDUALS BECOME VERY SUCCESSFUL AND THEN THEY WANT TO PULL EVERYBODY ELSE DOWN BECAUSE THEY WANT TO CONTINUE

BEING THE SUCCESSFUL ONE, THE ONE THAT'S AT THE TOP OF THE TOWER, THE KING OF THE KINGDOM.

DON'T DO THAT. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO BRING THOSE PEOPLE ALONG WITH YOU. ALL OF US DESERVE THAT SUCCESS.

IT'S CRUCIAL THAT WE MEET OUR POLITICIANS. KNOW YOUR MLAs, KNOW YOUR MPs.

HOW MANY OF YOU HERE DO?

GREAT. HOW MANY DON'T?

MANY.

I THINK IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU KNOW WHO YOUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES ARE. IN THE WORLD OF POLITICS, THERE ARE MANY ISSUES, AND YOU DON'T NEED TO JUST GO TO THEM FOR, YOU KNOW, SPECIFIC ISSUES ON DEAFNESS. GO TO THEM ABOUT ISSUES THAT AFFECT SOCIETY AT LARGE. SHOW THEM HOW MUCH YOU KNOW. SHOW THEM THAT YOU'RE AWARE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WORLD AND IN THE COMMUNITY THAT YOU LIVE IN AND WHAT YOU NEED AND WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE HAPPEN.

I'M JUST GOING TO BACK UP A LITTLE BIT. REMEMBER WHEN I WAS MENTIONING THAT I WAS THE PRESIDENT -- WHEN I INTERVIEWED FOR THE PRESIDENT POSITION OF CHS. THIS IS IN THE HAMILTON AREA IN ONTARIO.

NOW, REMEMBER I MENTIONED THAT I JUST HAD A BACHELOR OF ARTS, AND THERE WERE OTHER PEOPLE APPLYING WHO HAD MASTERS AND WHATNOT. BUT I HAD SOME PEOPLE SORT OF PUSHING ME AND ENCOURAGING ME TO APPLY.

WHAT I ENDED UP DOING IS I SORT OF LOOKED INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF DOING A MASTERS AND IF INTERPRETERS WOULD BE AVAILABLE AND WHATNOT AND TO SEE IF I SHOULD MAYBE GET SOME MORE EDUCATION. SO I

WAS EVENTUALLY ACCEPTED INTO A MASTERS PROGRAM AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY. AND SO I -- AS I'M GOING THROUGH THIS MASTERS, THE POSITION CAME UP FOR CHS, AND I THOUGHT OH, I DON'T KNOW. AM I READY FOR THIS? YOU KNOW. AND I SAW THAT ALL THE OTHER APPLICANTS HAD MASTERS AND WHATNOT. I THOUGHT WELL, I JUST HAVE THIS BA AND I DON'T HAVE MY MASTERS YET. I DON'T KNOW. AM I QUALIFIED ENOUGH? I HAD A LONG CONVERSATION WITH MY WIFE ABOUT IT. AND SHE LOOKED A LITTLE BIT SHOCKED. WHAT? YOU'RE CONSIDERING APPLYING FOR THAT NOW?

I SAID, WELL, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A DREAM OF MINE. AND SO SHE KIND OF SAID OKAY, WELL, GO FOR IT. IF YOU GET THE JOB, WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT THEN. FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO.

SO AS I SAID, I WAS DOING MY MASTERS. I PUT MY MASTERS ON HOLD. I APPLIED FOR THE POSITION. I WENT FOR THE FIRST INTERVIEW. IT WENT GREAT.

THERE WAS ABOUT, I THINK, OH, 12 OR 13 PEOPLE ON THE INTERVIEW PANEL AND ASKING ME ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO I WAS. YOU KNOW, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH THEY WERE DIGGING FOR A BIT OF MY HISTORY AND MY OWN EXPERIENCES.

SO OF COURSE I'M SITTING THERE RACKING MY BRAIN, THINKING I DON'T REMEMBER ALL THIS STUFF THAT HAPPENED IN MY PAST. DID I DO SOME OF THIS STUFF? BUT I THOUGHT YOU KNOW WHAT, KEEP MY COOL, BE POSITIVE. I'M NOT BEING INTERROGATED HERE. THEY'RE JUST GENUINELY INTERESTED IN WHO I AM AND WHAT I KNOW AND MY EXPERIENCES.

SO I WAS 7 YEARS AS A REGIONAL DIRECTOR AT CHS. I CLEANED UP A LITTLE BIT OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS THAT THEY HAD ABOUT MY PROFILE. AND AFTER THAT THEY OFFERED ME THE JOB.

AND, YOU KNOW, I COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT THEY ACTUALLY OFFERED ME THE JOB. I HAD TO PINCH MYSELF SEVERAL TIMES. AND I THOUGHT WOW, THIS WAS ACTUALLY A DREAM OF MINE, AND I THINK IT'S ACTUALLY COMING TRUE.

SO THE NIGHT BEFORE THE AGM, IT WAS SORT OF MY FIRST DAY OF WORK. AND -- OR IT WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF MY NEW JOB. IT WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE THE AGM. BUT IT WAS MY SISTER'S WEDDING HAPPENING AT THE SAME TIME. YOU KNOW, MY FAMILY WENT TO THE WEDDING. I WAS GOING TO MEET THEM LATER FOR THE PARTY, WHICH WE ALL KNOW IS THE BEST PART OF A WEDDING ANYWAYS.

THE NIGHT BEFORE MY FIRST DAY OF THIS NEW JOB, I WAS SAYING GOODNIGHT TO MY KIDS AND TALKING TO MY SON BRADEN, MY DEAF SON. AND HE SAID YOU KNOW WHAT, DAD, I'M REALLY PROUD OF YOU FOR BECOMING THE CEO OF CHS. BECAUSE OF YOU, MORE DEAF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO HAVE BETTER LIVES AND BETTER ACCESS AND MORE EQUALITY AND GREATER SUCCESSES IN LIFE.

AND THIS WAS COMING FROM MY YOUNG SON. IT WAS VERY POIGNANT, AND IT REALLY IMPACTED ME.

AND IT WAS HARD FOR ME TO HOLD BACK THE TEARS, THAT SUCH A YOUNG BOY WOULD SAY SOMETHING SO INSPIRING AND BE SO PROUD OF ME FOR WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO EMBARK UPON.

BUT THE OTHER THING WAS THAT I FELT VERY SAD BY WHAT HE SAID, BECAUSE BY THE AGE OF 8 HE ALREADY KNEW VERY CLEARLY WHAT THE BARRIERS WERE FOR DEAF PEOPLE.

AND HE KNEW THAT DEAF PEOPLE WERE NOT EQUAL TO THE LARGER HEARING SOCIETY. AT THE AGE OF 8, HE ALREADY KNEW THAT.

WHEN I WAS 8, I THOUGHT THE WORLDS WAS FLAT. YOU KNOW, HE --

IT WAS A VERY INSIGHTFUL COMMENT THAT HE MADE THAT HAS REALLY STUCK WITH ME.

AND SO NOW THAT -- WHEN I BECAME THE CEO, I THOUGHT I'M GOING TO MAKE CHANGE, I'M GOING TO GET IN THERE AND ROLL MY SLEEVES UP AND WORK REALLY HARD AND I'M GOING TO OPEN ALL THESE DOORS FOR THE DEAF COMMUNITY.

AND I REALLY FELT LIKE I WAS GOING TO BE ABLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, AND I DID FEEL PROUD OF MYSELF AS A DEAF INDIVIDUAL.

AND I'M NOT TELLING YOU ALL THIS TO BRAG. I'M TELLING YOU THIS TO PROVE TO YOU THAT WE CAN BE SUCCESSFUL, AND YOU CAN BE SUCCESSFUL, AND WE CAN BREAK DOWN BARRIERS AND MAKE CHANGES.

AND SO I'M REALLY JUST HERE TO ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU TO TRY AND DO THE SAME, TO TRY TO OPEN UP MORE DOORS FOR YOURSELF, TO CREATE MORE AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU.

AND IT'S NOT JUST YOU AS DEAF INDIVIDUALS THAT NEED TO DO ALL THIS WORK. THERE ARE PEOPLE FROM THE LARGER HEARING COMMUNITY THAT ARE INTERESTED IN BEING A PART OF THE CHANGE, TOO, TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR US.

BUT IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT THAT YOU ARE READY AND WILLING TO PUT THE WORK IN TO MAKE A CHANGE FOR YOURSELF.

HERE I JUST HAVE LISTED THE VISION AND GOALS OF THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY. OF COURSE WE HAVE A VISION OF EQUALITY, BARRIER-FREE EDUCATION, SUCCESS IN ANY PROFESSION, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU'RE DEAF OR HEARING. DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING. IT SHOULD BE SIMPLY A MATTER OF WHAT YOUR SKILLS ARE AND YOUR QUALIFICATIONS. THAT SHOULD BE THE DETERMINING FACTOR OF WHETHER OR NOT YOU GET A JOB AND WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL.

WE HAVE A VISION OF EMPOWERING DEAF INDIVIDUALS.
SOLIDARITY.

WE HAVE A CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS FOR ALL. WE
WANT PEOPLE TO BE PROUD AND FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS FOR EQUALITY.
AND WE WANT TO PRACTICE WHAT WE PREACH.

AND OF COURSE WE WANT AN END TO DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION.

THE PICTURE I HAVE HERE ON THE SLIDE IS THE SUN BEING COVERED
BY A CLOUD, AND IT'S SIMILAR TO THE EXPERIENCES THAT WE HAVE WITH
GOALS AND VISIONS AND DREAMS. THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING IN THE WAY.
YOU KNOW, WE'RE ALWAYS EXCITED ABOUT WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE AND
THE GOALS THAT WE HAVE AND THE DREAMS, BUT WE ALWAYS FEEL THAT
THERE'S SOMETHING STOPPING US. SOMETHING IN THE WAY THAT'S
CLOUDING OUR VISION AND CLOUDING OUR DREAMS. WE HAVE TO PUSH THAT
CLOUD OR THAT BARRIER AWAY.

SO UP HERE I HAVE THE MISSION OF THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY.
AS YOU CAN SEE, OUR MISSION IS TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION,
TO ENCOURAGE RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING, ADVANCE HEARING HEALTH,
PROMOTE EQUALITY FOR ALL PEOPLE WHO ARE CULTURALLY DEAF, ORAL DEAF,
AND HARD OF HEARING.

AND OUR VISION IS TO HAVE A SOCIETY WHERE ALL PEOPLE ARE
RESPECTED, HAVE FULL ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION, ARE ABLE TO
PARTICIPATE WITHOUT BARRIERS OF ANY KIND, WHETHER THEY'RE
EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL, OR ECONOMIC.

WOULD YOU ALL AGREE WITH THIS VISION?

YOU KNOW. AND AS ROUZBEH SAID, IN HIS OWN EXPERIENCE WITH CHS,
THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF POSITIVE CHANGES WITH THE ORGANIZATION
OVER THE YEARS. A LOT MORE TRANSPARENCY WITH WHAT WE DO, A LOT

FOUNDATION, OF OUR COMMUNITY. AND THIS FOUNDATION IS YOU. AND OUR HEARING ALLIES, TEACHERS OF THE DEAF, INTERPRETERS, FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS. THEY ALL -- ALL OF US TOGETHER FORM THE FOUNDATION. WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THAT FOUNDATION, I BELIEVE, BEFORE WE CAN MOVE ON. AND HAVING THAT STRONG FOUNDATION HELPS US TO GET OUR MESSAGE OUT AND HELPS US TO BE MORE SUCCESSFUL.

I NOTICE MORE AND MORE OF OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS EXPERIENCING SUCCESS, AND WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THAT.

I HAVE KNOWN DEB FOR ABOUT 20 YEARS NOW. GOSH, WE'RE GETTING OLD. I REMEMBER WHEN SHE WAS JUST THIS YOUNG, FRESH, SPRITELY LITTLE INTERPRETER. AND SHE WAS ALWAYS VERY ENCOURAGING AND INVOLVED AND POSITIVE. AND I REMEMBER ENCOURAGING HER TO KEEP GOING. AND NOW LOOK AT HER. SHE'S LIKE THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERPRETING WORLD.

I MEAN, SHE'S REALLY TAKEN OFF AND BEEN EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.

YOU KNOW, I SOMETIMES THINK YOU KNOW WHAT, IF SHE HADN'T HAD SO MUCH POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT, SHE MAY NOT BE WHERE SHE IS TODAY. YOU KNOW, IF PEOPLE WERE CONSTANTLY GIVING HER NEGATIVE FEEDBACK AND CRITICISM, SHE MAY NOT HAVE MADE IT THIS FAR.

BUT SHE HAS SUCCEEDED BY WHAT SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN, THE SUPPORT AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT.

AND SO NOW I'M HOPING THAT THE TABLE WILL TURN AND THAT PEOPLE FROM THE LARGER HEARING SOCIETY WILL PROVIDE US IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY WITH THAT SAME POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT THAT DEB RECEIVED FROM THE DEAF COMMUNITY TO HELP HER SUCCEED.

SO WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER. IT'S NOT US AGAINST THEM. WE

NEED TO WORK TOGETHER.

AND YOU KNOW I'M NOT POINTING DEB OUT HERE. YOU KNOW, IT REALLY APPLIES TO ANYBODY IN OUR COMMUNITIES, DEAF OR HEARING. WE ALL BENEFIT FROM POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT.

YOU KNOW, IF WE CAN DO THAT, PROVIDE THAT TYPE OF SUPPORT TO MORE DEAF PEOPLE, I THINK MORE PEOPLE WILL SEE THAT THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE WITH QUALIFICATIONS AND WHO CAN DO THE WORK.

OFTEN WE NEED TO TAKE AWAY THE ATTITUDES OF HAVING BIAS AND UNBIASED OPINIONS. WE ARE ALL HERE WORKING TOGETHER. WE'RE NOT MACHINES. RIGHT? WE'RE HUMANS.

AND, YOU KNOW, WE HAVE OUR GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS. YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES YOU MIGHT BE SITTING IN YOUR CAR, LIKE I'VE DONE IN THE PAST, AND JUST WANT TO SCREAM. I'M OUT OF HERE. I'M FRUSTRATED. I'M TIRED OF ALL THIS. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I DO. WE CAN'T ACCESS WHAT WE NEED. THERE'S ALL THESE BARRIERS.

YOU KNOW, IT JUST SEEMS LIKE SUCH A SIMPLE PROBLEM TO FIX, BUT I'M GETTING NOWHERE.

HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?

I MEAN, I STILL HAVE DAYS LIKE THAT. YOU KNOW, YOU GET HOME AND YOU FEEL SO FRUSTRATED AND ANGRY WITH THINGS THAT HAVE GONE ON THAT DAY. YOU KNOW, THE FIRE IS JUST BURNING IN YOUR BELLY AND YOU THINK I JUST WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE.

AND YOU KNOW, I TELL MY WIFE, SOMETIMES I NEED TO GET OUT AND JUST HAVE A BREAK AND GET AWAY FROM IT ALL, AND SHE UNDERSTANDS THAT.

BUT, YOU KNOW, TO YOUR QUESTION, SHELLEY, THERE REALLY IS NO EASY ANSWER. YOU'RE RIGHT.

EVERYTHING IS THERE AND READY FOR US TO MAKE THE CHANGE. WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER TO JUST GO FOR IT.

>>: OKAY. I HAVE A QUESTION. DO YOU THINK THAT THE DEAF COMMUNITY HAS MORE STRUGGLES AND DIFFICULTIES THAN OTHER ETHNIC COMMUNITIES?

CHRIS KENOPIC: YOU KNOW, REALLY IN MY OPINION, I THINK EACH MINORITY GROUP HAS THEIR OWN ISSUES AND THEIR OWN BARRIERS. I THINK FOR US, OUR BIGGEST ISSUE WITHIN THE DEAF COMMUNITY IS ACCESS TO LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION, AND THAT'S NOT NECESSARILY A BARRIER THAT OTHER MINORITIES EXPERIENCE.

YOU KNOW, THERE'S ONE PERSON -- I WAS HOPING THEY WERE GOING TO BE HERE TONIGHT, BUT I WAS CHATTING WITH THEM THIS MORNING. AND THEY WORK FOR THE NEWSPAPER. HE'S THE ONLY DEAF PERSON WHO IS WORKING FOR THIS NEWSPAPER.

AND, YOU KNOW, HE SAID THAT THE MAN WHO INTERVIEWED HIM WASN'T WHITE, AND HIS ENGLISH WASN'T THAT GREAT EITHER. AND HE -- AND SO HE SORT OF FELT, YOU KNOW WHAT, WE'RE KIND OF ON THE SAME PAGE. HE'S FROM A MY MINORITY GROUP. HIS ENGLISH IS NOT GOOD. WE'D SIMILAR BARRIERS.

SO THERE ARE BARRIERS, BUT I WOULDN'T SAY THAT WE HAVE MORE OR LESS THAN ANY OTHER GROUP.

>>: HELLO, HELLO, EVERYBODY.

FANTASTIC, CHRIS. AND UNIQUE. YES, WE ARE UNIQUE INDEED. I ALSO GREW UP IN ONTARIO. I AM FROM ON KNOW. AND I DO SEE THE CHANGE, THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FROM THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

THAT I KNEW TO WHAT IT IS TODAY.

SO I GUESS I'M CURIOUS, CHRIS, IF YOU COULD SHARE WHAT YOUR VISION IS FOR CHS IN THE YEARS TO COME.

CHRIS KENOPIC: WELL, INTERNALLY, CHS HAS ABOUT 450 EMPLOYEES, AND THEN WE HAVE SOME OTHER -- ABOUT 100 SORT OF CONTRACT WORKERS. SO REALLY OVER 550 PEOPLE WHO ARE ON -- ARE ON PAYROLL WITH CHS.

NOW, THE PERCENTAGE OF THOSE WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING, I'M TRYING TO REMEMBER HERE. I MEAN, WE DO -- WE DO HAVE MORE AND MORE DEAF PEOPLE WORKING FOR CHS, BUT IN TERMS OF MANAGERIAL POSITIONS, YOU NOTICE A DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF DEAF WORKING AT THOSE HIGHER LEVELS.

YOU KNOW, IT TOOK ME A LONG TIME TO GET TO WHERE I AM AND SORT OF MOVE UP THE LADDER. SO THAT'S ONE AREA THAT I'M REALLY HOPING TO SEE SOME CHANGES. I'M HOPING TO SEE MORE DEAF PEOPLE UP IN THE HIGHER MANAGERIAL POSITIONS.

AND FOR ME, OVER THE YEARS I HAVEN'T ALWAYS HAD A LOT OF MENTOR SUPPORT TO SORT OF HELP ME GET THROUGH MY STRUGGLES AND CHALLENGES. BUT I THINK I AM VERY FORTUNATE TO GET TO WHERE I AM THROUGH A LOT OF HARD WORK AND A LOT OF CHANGES.

SO I SAT DOWN WITH SOME PEOPLE IN THE HR DEPARTMENT, AND THERE ARE SOME HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE THAT HAVE WORKED THERE FOR A LONG TIME. SO A LOT OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION, I'M HOPING TO PLAN SORT OF A SUCCESSION AND PROVIDE ROLE MODELS FOR PEOPLE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION.

AND THAT MODEL IS NOT JUST FOR CHS INTERNALLY. WE HAVE HAD

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS CONTACT US FROM ACROSS CANADA TO ASK US HOW WE SUPPORT EMPLOYEES WITHIN OUR ORGANIZATIONS TO HELP THEM BE SUCCESSFUL AND MOVE INTO HIGHER UP POSITIONS.

YOU KNOW, WE DO HAVE INFORMATION THAT WE CAN SHARE WITH THEM, BUT WE DON'T REALLY HAVE A FORMALIZED PROGRAM AS OF YET. BUT IT'S BEEN A VERY POSITIVE THING WITHIN OUR ORGANIZATION, BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE THE SORT OF SUPPORT AND MENTORSHIP FOR EMPLOYEES TO HELP THEM MOVE INTO POSITIONS AT A HIGHER LEVEL.

MOST OF THE PEOPLE CONTACTING US ARE FROM HARD OF HEARING ORGANIZATIONS AND ARE VERY INTERESTED TO HEAR ABOUT THIS IDEA OF MENTORSHIP.

I THINK TYPICALLY WHAT HAPPENS IS WHEN SOMEBODY COMPLETES THEIR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, THERE REALLY ISN'T ANYTHING LEFT FOR THEM WHEN THEY GET OUT THERE. THERE'S NO MENTORSHIP, NO SUPPORT, NO TRAINING, I SUPPOSE, TO REALLY PROVIDE A PERSON WITH THAT EXTRA ESSENTIAL COMPONENT TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL IN MOVING UP IN THE RANKS.

AND FOR ME, MY GOAL, YOU KNOW, IS TO BE WITH CHS FOR A LIMITED PERIOD OF TIME. (Laughter) I WANT TO ENJOY MY LIFE. I DO HAVE PLANS.

BUT SOME OF THE OTHER THINGS THAT I WANT TO DO, YOU KNOW, -- I GUESS SOME OF THE ISSUES I WANT TO DEAL WITH ARE THINGS I WANT TO SEE DONE BEFORE I LEAVE IN MY TIME. WHEN I LEAVE CHS AND IF I FEEL LIKE THIS HASN'T BEEN DONE, THERE'S NO ALARM OR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS DEALT WITH, THE MENTORSHIP -- LIKE, I WOULDN'T CONSIDER MYSELF SUCCESSFUL IF I HAVEN'T ACCOMPLISHED THOSE SPECIFIC ASPECTS.

SO THAT'S COMING FROM A VERY HONEST PERSPECTIVE IN MY EYES, AND IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT THAT WE WORK TOGETHER TO SEE THOSE CHANGES

HAPPEN.

GRANT UNDERSCHULTZ: SO CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY IN ONTARIO AND, YOU KNOW, PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SURROUNDING AREAS, CAN YOU EXPLAIN A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE SUPPORT THAT YOU PROVIDE? AND HOW MANY OFFICES DO YOU HAVE ACROSS CANADA?

CHRIS KENOPIC: I'VE GOT A LOT OF PEOPLE ASKING ME THAT, AND SOME PEOPLE HAVE SAID CHANGE IT TO THE ONTARIO HEARING SOCIETY. I HAVE SAID NO. IT NEEDS TO STAY AS THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY.

WE'RE NOT TRYING TO TAKE AWAY WHAT OTHER PROVINCES ARE ALREADY PROVIDING AND OFFERING BECAUSE THEY'RE OFFERING SOME VERY GOOD SERVICES. I GUESS WHAT WE'RE LOOKING AT IS OVERALL LEGISLATION, POLICY STANDARDS, AND WANTING TO SEE STANDARDIZATION ACROSS THE PROVINCES TO ENCOURAGE INCREASED ACCESS, TO IMPROVE THE RIGHTS FOR ALL INDIVIDUALS IN EVERY PROVINCE.

SOMETIMES IT HAS TO DO WITH TECHNOLOGY. SOMETIMES CHS CAN PROVIDE TRAINING. SOMETIMES IT'S DIRECT COUNSELING SERVICES. BECAUSE CHS OFFERS THOSE SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING SERVICES. OTHER PROVINCES MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DO THAT.

SO AS AN EXAMPLE RIGHT NOW, WE ARE WORKING WITH QUEBEC, AND THEY WANT A LIST OF SERVICES. YOU KNOW, THEY DO HAVE A COUPLE OF AGENCIES THAT CAN PROVIDE THAT, BUT APPARENTLY IT'S NOT WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR AND IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

SO I HAVE GONE AND I HAVE DELIVERED AND SHARED INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT CHS CAN OFFER AND THEN THOSE CONNECTIONS CAN BE MADE. AND IF THE GOVERNMENT IS INTERESTED IN CONTRACTING WITH US OR AFFILIATING IN SOME SENSE, THEN WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO WORK WITH THEM TO PROVIDE THOSE ADDITIONAL SERVICES IN THAT AREA.

OUR CHS BOARD MEMBERS ARE NOT ALL FROM ONTARIO. WE HAVE TWO FROM ALBERTA, ONE FROM MANITOBA, ONE FROM HALIFAX, AND THEN THE REST OF US ARE FROM VARIOUS LOCATIONS ACROSS ONTARIO.

AND WE WANT TO MAINTAIN IT AS A CANADIAN BOARD.

>>: I'M GOING TO ADDRESS MY QUESTION TO YOU.

DOES THE CANADIAN HEARING ASSOCIATION HAVE A POSITION FOR IMPLANTS, COCHLEAR IMPLANTS? DOES IT HAVE A POSITION?

>>: THE QUESTION IS DOES THE CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY HAVE A FORMAL POSITION ON COCHLEAR IMPLANTS.

CHRIS KENOPIC: THANK YOU FOR ASKING THAT QUESTION, SIR.

YES. ACTUALLY, RIGHT NOW CHS IS WORKING ON A POSITION PAPER REGARDING COCHLEAR IMPLANTS. AT THIS MOMENT, OUR POSITION IS THAT WE WANT TO HAVE RESPECT FOR ANY DECISIONS THAT DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE MAKE.

WE DO HAVE A FEW EMPLOYEES AT CHS THAT HAVE COCHLEAR IMPLANTS, AND OUR CFO IS ONE OF THEM.

AND IF I COULD JUST ADD, OUR CFO IS AN AMAZING WORKER AND SADLY WANTS TO MOVE TO AFRICA, AND WE'RE BEGGING HIM TO STAY. THAT'S JUST AN ASIDE.

BUT CHS HAS NO, I GUESS, OPINION REALLY ABOUT COCHLEAR IMPLANTS. WE DON'T FIND THEM CONTROVERSIAL.

I KNOW IF YOU ASKED ME THE SAME QUESTION SEVERAL YEARS AGO, CHS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE A DIFFERENT POSITION ON THAT ISSUE.

CHS, AS WELL AS OTHER PEOPLE, HAVE BECOME MORE EDUCATED AND AWARE ABOUT COCHLEAR IMPLANTS AND THE IDEA OF MUTUAL RESPECT FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE THEM, PEOPLE WISHING TO ACCESS LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

AND RIGHT NOW CHS IS WORKING WITH TWO DIFFERENT COCHLEAR IMPLANT COMPANIES TO SEE HOW WE CAN INCREASE OUR SERVICES TO INCORPORATE SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH COCHLEAR IMPLANTS.

IN ONTARIO, THERE IS A CHIEF AUDIOLOGIST WHO I SPOKE TO, AND INTERESTINGLY THERE ARE MORE AUDIOLOGISTS WITHIN ONTARIO THAN AROUND THE ENTIRE WORLD.

AND I KNOW THAT QUITE OFTEN CHILDREN WHO RECEIVE COCHLEAR IMPLANTS ARE ENCOURAGED NOT TO SIGN, BUT OUR POSITION WITH CHS IS THAT WHETHER -- IF THE CHILD HAS A COCHLEAR IMPLANT AND THEY WILL BENEFIT FROM SIGNING, THEN THAT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED. AND WE NEED TO EDUCATE PARENTS ABOUT THE DIFFERENT OPTIONS FOR THESE CHILDREN FOR COMMUNICATION.

SO LIKE I SAID, THERE'S THREE PEOPLE ON THE BOARD WHO HAVE IMPLANTS. ONE OF THEM IS A MOTHER OF A DEAF CHILD. AND SHE'S A MEMBER OF ANOTHER ORGANIZATION THAT DOES NOT SUPPORT SIGN LANGUAGE AND SIGNING. SO WHEN SHE LEARNED ABOUT CHS, SHE BECAME MORE INVOLVED WITH US AND OUR SERVICES, AND SO NOW SHE'S TRYING TO EDUCATE PEOPLE TO BE MORE RESPECTFUL OF THE CHOICES AND OPTIONS THAT ARE OUT THERE FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE.

SO I HOPE THAT ANSWERED YOUR QUESTION REGARDING OUR POSITION ON THE IMPLANTS.

>>: YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES PEOPLE CAN BE VERY STUBBORN AND THAT CAN BE THE BARRIER IN ITSELF. SOMETIMES IT'S LIKE THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND, AND I FEEL VERY DISGUSTED BY THAT. YOU KNOW, I FEEL DISGUSTED WHEN PEOPLE REFUSE TO TAKE ON A LEADERSHIP ROLE AND ACCEPT THE STATUS QUO.

I AM HERE TO STAND UP HERE AND SAY THAT WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE

POSITIVE.

SO LIKE SHE JUST SAID, WE NEED TO BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO MAKE THE CHANGES, TO MAKE THE CHOICES TO MOVE AHEAD, OPENING OUR EYES TO SEE WHAT POTENTIAL IS OUT THERE AND MAKE THE POSITIVE CHANGES.

(Applause)

DEBRA RUSSELL: I KNOW THAT THERE'S MORE QUESTIONS TO BE HAD, BUT I THINK DURING THE WINE AND CHEESE WE COULD ALSO APPROACH CHRIS WITH SOME OF THOSE QUESTIONS.

SO I WANT TO THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING HERE, SHARING THAT INFORMATION WITH US. IT'S TRULY INSPIRING. AND WE ALSO HAVE A VERY SMALL TOKEN OF APPRECIATION FOR YOU, AND YOU MIGHT ENJOY THIS TITLE.

IT SAYS, YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD - BECOME A TEACHER. BUT CHRIS, OBVIOUSLY AS A TEACHER, YOU WILL CHANGE THE WORLD. AND YOU TRULY ARE A TEACHER.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING HERE AND SHARING YOUR INFORMATION WITH US TONIGHT.

(Applause)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TOWARDS ME FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS. YOU CERTAINLY SAW ME AS I WAS, AS A BABY INTERPRETER. SO THANK YOU FOR THAT.

AS I MENTIONED, WE DO HAVE A WINE AND CHEESE, NOT HERE IN THIS BUILDING, HOWEVER. YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE YOUR WAY DOWN TO THE NORTH TOWER, 4TH FLOOR. SO IF YOU CAN JUST FOLLOW PEOPLE, THERE ARE SOME STUDENTS FROM LAKELAND COLLEGE'S INTERPRETING PROGRAM THAT COULD GUIDE US THERE.

PLEASE ENJOY YOURSELF, SOCIALIZE, ASK CHRIS SOME MORE QUESTIONS

AND HAVE A GOOD EVENING.

I WANT TO THANK THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM TONIGHT, JANICE PLOMP OUR CART PROVIDER, OR TWO INTERPRETERS, CARLA DUPRAS AND MONICA ANDERSON.

THANK YOU, ROUZBEH AND SHELLEY, FOR BOTH OF YOUR COMMENTS AND REMARKS.

THANK YOU AGAIN TO ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF FOR HOSTING/COHOSTING.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THANKS TO STUDENTS FROM LAKELAND COLLEGE FOR VIDEOTAPING TONIGHT, SETTING UP, ORGANIZING. NOT POURING THE WINE BUT HELPING TO ARRANGE FOR THE WINE AND CHEESE TO BE READY FOR US.

THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU FOR COMING TONIGHT. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THE REST OF YOUR EVENING AND THAT THAT CARRIES ON THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE WEEK.