

**\$74,800 OTF Grant for Encouraging Deaf Engagement**

**Oshawa, ON** – In 2019, the Durham Deaf Services (DDS) received a \$74,800 Seed grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation help it translate its Board Governance materials into American Sign Language (ASL). This grant allowed DDS to take steps to empower and encourage the engagement of the Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing communities by providing equal access and opportunity to become members of its Board of Directors and taking leadership in the agency.

“I am so impressed by the work the Durham Deaf Services (DDS) have been able to accomplish with the Seed grant they have received,” said Jennifer French, MPP for Oshawa. “Having resources available in ASL is an important step in removing barriers to access, allowing for increased participation of the Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing communities that the DDS serves. The DDS has long challenged barriers within the larger community, and they always lead by example. I am glad to see Trillium’s recognition and support, so they can continue to do vital work.”

The Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing communities are typically marginalized, and having translated material can promote individuals to join and become actively involved in their community/board. Currently, DDS Board Policies and By-Laws are written in English, which in itself is a barrier to the Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing community as English is their second language. Having these documents translated into ASL will have a greater impact.

“The translation of Board policies by-laws will deepen the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of any Deaf person who represents DDS on our Board of Directors,” said Rob Lalonde, President, DDS Board of Directors. “We are grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their leadership in providing funding so that everyone on our Board has access to information in their first language.”

Durham Deaf Services is a non-profit organization that offers services and programs that promote self-reliance within the Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing Community. DDS is committed to increasing Deaf cultural awareness. DDS will strive to encourage the active participation of Deaf, Deafened, and Hard of Hearing members on the Board and on committees. For more information about DDS, please visit: [www.durhamdeaf.org](http://www.durhamdeaf.org).

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada’s leading granting foundations. OTF awarded \$115 million to 644 projects last year to build healthy and vibrant communities in Ontario. For more information, please visit: [otf.ca](http://otf.ca).

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