

Dear [NAME OF CANDIDATE],

As a resident of [RIDING], I am writing to you today to highlight the need to make the communication health of Canadian children a priority in the 2015 federal election.

I am specifically concerned with the state of **Canada's early hearing detection and intervention (EHDI) programs**, which screen newborns for possible hearing loss and provide comprehensive intervention services. Newborn hearing screening is an effective and inexpensive procedure for detecting hearing problems and has become the standard of care in many countries. For example, 97% of babies in the United States are screened.

Without proper screening and intervention, undetected hearing loss can result in language, cognitive, academic, social and emotional difficulties. Early identification is absolutely key.

Although many countries have EHDI programs in place, they only exist in limited areas within Canada. Furthermore, in many of the Canadian provinces and territories that do have EHDI programs, many of them are inadequate. (For more information please see the [report card](#) released by the Canadian Infant Hearing Task Force (CIHTF) last year on the state of EHDI programs in Canada.)

This is a national issue that needs to be addressed immediately. **The federal government must provide leadership and work with the provinces and territories towards the establishment and maintenance of integrated, consistent and culturally-sensitive EHDI programs across Canada.** All children in Canada deserve access to comprehensive EHDI programs, regardless of where they live.

Permanent childhood hearing loss has been described by some experts as a neurologic emergency. Studies show that extended periods of auditory deprivation can have a significant impact on a child's overall brain development. As such, it is shameful that Canada does not have comprehensive EHDI programs in place throughout the country.

My concerns regarding this issue are fully supported by Speech-Language and Audiology Canada (SAC) and its more than 6,000 members and associates from across the country. SAC is the only national organization supporting and representing speech-language pathologists, audiologists and communication health assistants inclusively. The association works tirelessly to advocate for the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology and to champion the needs of people with communication disorders.

I trust that, upon reading this letter, you will give this issue the attention it deserves and consider making it an important focus of your campaign moving forward.

Signed,

[INSERT NAME]

For more information regarding SAC, please visit www.sac-oac.ca. You can also join the discussion online and share where YOU stand on the importance of communication health by using the #CommunicationHealth hashtag and following [@SAC_OAC](#) on Twitter.