

BC VIDEO RELAY SERVICES COMMITTEE
C/O WESTERN INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
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Mr. Jean-Pierre Blais, Chairman
Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2

Re: Video Relay Service under Accessibility of telecommunications and broadcasting services regulation 2009-430

Dear Mr. Blais:

This is an Open Letter sent on behalf of the Deaf community of British Columbia, we wish to commend you on the recent CRTC action within the national Canadian Video Relay Service project: the Bell Canada feasibility study and the Telus Communications' 18 month trial. We are confident that a permanent VRS service is on the way.

We appreciate the facilities that the CRTC made accessible in the past forty years, starting with teletypewriters, closed captioning, message relay centers, emergency 911 services; and most recently, with the IP-relay service.

The CRTC has demonstrated great interest in the research & development process through the Bell VRS feasibility study and the Telus VRS trial, and with this support, the project has met several deadlines that we believe has worked in our favour. We are also thankful that the CRTC has also acknowledged the real accessibility needs of the Deaf through the Internet.

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including Article 9, which affirms the rights for a wider public accessibility to other telecommunication technologies, we are entitled to certain rights as Deaf Canadians. We trust the CRTC will affirm for a national Video Relay Service in both official languages of Canada, English and French, and the sign languages, ASL and LSQ, as the right of Deaf citizens.

We only ask that CRTC meet our demands as follows:

1. Provisions for Visual Language Interpreters in both American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ) by all telecommunications.
2. The choice of using any accessible VRS communication technologies that are currently available and/or those that may be developed in the future.
3. Flexibility and opportunities for a market of VRS products and services to be provided.
4. Mandatory involvement from the Deaf community in the consultation and accommodations of the implementation and operations of the Canadian VRS industry.
5. A decision of YES for a permanent VRS service in Canada made by **December 31, 2012.**

We ask the Commission to render a timely decision to enable a permanent national VRS service, which guarantees that the social, economic, political and cultural needs of the Deaf Canadians are satisfied. We look forward to the measures to be put in place by December 2012.

We have not forgotten what the CRTC did for Deaf citizens and we have faith, that the needs of Deaf Canadians for equal access will be met in telecommunications.

This letter is supported by the Canadian Association of the Deaf, and the Chairpersons of each Provincial VRS Awareness Day event.

Sincerely,



BC-VRS Committee