

Interviews Report

2024-288

Defining “Canadian program” and supporting the creation and distribution of Canadian programming in the audio-visual sector

2025-2

The Path Forward – Working towards a sustainable Canadian broadcasting system

February 24, 2025

DEAF
WIRELESS
CANADA
COMMITTEE



COMITÉ POUR LES
SERVICES
SANS FIL DES
SOURDS DU
CANADA

Major issues for Deaf Communities in Canada



Key Issue #1

Need for Policy and Regulation Reform

- Inadequate Regulations for Sign Language Accessibility
 - Current regulations fail to ensure sign language inclusion in media, leaving Deaf communities without consistent access to essential content
- Lack of Incentives for Deaf Talent in Media
 - No structured policy to encourage the hiring and training of Deaf professionals, such as ASL and LSQ experts, in key creative roles within the media and broadcasting industries



Key Issue #2

Lack of Sign Language Representation in Media

- Underrepresentation of Sign Languages in Broadcasts
 - ASL and LSQ are often excluded from mainstream media, limiting access for Deaf communities to vital content in their primary language
- Limited Inclusion of Deaf Talent Behind the Scenes
 - Lack of Deaf professionals in key creative and production roles, such as directors, writers, and showrunners, preventing authentic representation and perspectives



Key Issue #3

Inaccessibility of Urgent News and Health Information

- Lack of Sign Language Interpretation in Urgent Broadcasts
 - Emergency news, health, and safety broadcasts often exclude ASL and LSQ interpretation, leaving Deaf communities without critical information during emergencies
- Absence of Captioning in Time-sensitive Content
 - Urgent news and health updates frequently lack timely captioning, preventing Deaf viewers from accessing crucial information in real-time during emergencies



Key Issue #4

Absence of Dedicated Deaf TV and Streaming Platforms

- Limited Access to Deaf-Centric Content
 - Limited access to television and streaming content that is produced specifically for Deaf communities, leaving a gap in relevant, engaging programming
- Insufficient Support for Deaf-Centered Content Creation
 - Minimal funding or infrastructure for producing and broadcasting content specifically created for Deaf communities, hindering their access to media in ASL or LSQ



Key Issue #5

Limited Professional Opportunities for Deaf Talent

- Limited Representation of Deaf Professionals in Media Roles
 - Deaf individuals face significant barriers to entering key roles such as directors, producers, and creative positions within the media and entertainment industries
- Lack of Support for Career Advancement for Deaf Talent
 - Few programs or initiatives designed to foster the career development and growth of Deaf professionals in media, leaving limited pathways for advancement



Interview #1



Biography

- Montreal native Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ) user
- High school teacher for LSQ students
- Taught English as a second language in parallel with American Sign Language (ASL)
- LSQ vlogger for [Novelsq](#) that provides urgent news, health and emergency information in LSQ for viewers across Canada



Biography

- 25 years+ as an ASL-LSQ interpreter and translator
- Owner of TraduSigne, a Deaf interpreting agency that provides multilingual interpreting services across Canada
- Leader in training other Deaf multilingual interpreters in Quebec and Ontario
- Taught in the interpreter training program at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM) for 15+ years



Challenges and Needs

1. Urgent Need for LSQ Broadcasting Access

- Deaf Communities in Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick require access to LSQ broadcasting information within broadcasting and streaming services

2. Limited LSQ Media Representation

- Few LSQ broadcasters, multimedia directors, signing crews, showrunners, creative directors, vloggers, and streaming providers exist in Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick



Challenges and Needs

3. Essential LSQ and French Captioning

- All broadcasts, podcasts, webcasts, and vodcasts providing urgent news, health, and emergency information must include LSQ and English captioning for accessibility

4. Access to Urgent Information for LSQ viewers

- Audiovisual media related to urgent news, health, and emergencies should be accessible to Deaf LSQ viewers using LSQ to ensure timely access to critical information



Challenges and Needs

5. LSQ Deaf TV Entertainment and Events

- Have access to Deaf TV entertainment, personalities, news, and special events
 - Deaflympics
 - UN International Day of Sign Languages
 - National broadcasts in Canada



Recommendation #1

CRTC Regulation for LSQ Inclusion

- The CRTC should mandate TV broadcasting and streaming services to modernize and include LSQ in the definition of "Canadian Program," ensuring accessibility, with LSQ signing crews (directors and actors) involved from pre-production to distribution



Recommendation #2

Incentive-Based System for Deaf LSQ Professionals

- The CRTC should introduce an incentive system where productions earn additional certification points for hiring Deaf LSQ professionals in key creative roles
 - Showrunners
 - Writers
 - Deaf LSQ accessibility consultants



Recommendation #3

Compliance Mechanism for Accessibility Standards

- The CRTC must establish a compliance system to ensure taxpayer-supported programming meets accessibility standards and serves all Canadians, including LSQ Deaf communities, aligned with the Accessible Canada Act



Recommendation #4

Feasibility Study for LSQ Deaf TV Channel

- The CRTC should fund a feasibility study for a pilot project to establish a LSQ Deaf TV broadcasting and streaming channel in Canada
 - Model after the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT), which commissions programs made in British Sign Language (BSL) for BSL Deaf users



Interview #2



Biography

- Deaf Native American Sign Language (ASL) user
- Studied broadcasting courses at Algonquin College
- Took courses at International Academy of design & Technology
- Became a freelance video producer, web developer and doing the work in film and multimedia industries
- Passion is making documentaries of Deaf people lives and sharing Deaf experiences stories



Biography

- Founded Online **Deaf Ontario TV** in 2009
 - Popular streaming for Deaf viewers nationally and globally
 - Closed in 2012 due to insufficient funding
- Founded **PAH Media** in 2022



Alvin Witcher

Alvin feels that it is crucial to give back and continue to make contributions to our Deaf communities across Canada by creating spaces for us to produce Deaf documentaries and films of Deaf people's lived experiences carry stories of Deaf people and Deaf communities throughout history, from the past to the present and the future, from Deaf adults to Deaf children.

“We are their role models and their inspirations.”



Challenges and Needs

1. Urgent need for ASL Broadcasting Access

- ASL Deaf Canadians and communities across Canada urgently need access to ASL broadcasting and streaming services
- Many ASL Deaf viewers currently use streaming services over traditional TV broadcasters



Challenges and Needs

2. Lack of ASL Professionals

- There is a shortage of ASL broadcasters, multimedia directors, signing crews, showrunners, creative directors, vloggers, and streaming service providers across Canada

3. Essential ASL and English Captioning

- All broadcasts, podcasts, webcasts, and vodcasts providing urgent news, health, and emergency information must include ASL and English captioning for accessibility



Challenges and Needs

4. Access to Urgent Information for ASL Viewers

- Audiovisual media services for urgent news, health, and emergency info must be accessible to ASL Deaf viewers, ensuring timely access to critical information

5. ASL Deaf TV Entertainment and Events

- Have access to Deaf TV entertainment, personalities, news, and special events



Recommendation #1

CRTC Regulation for ASL Inclusion

- The CRTC should mandate TV broadcasting and streaming services to modernize and include ASL in the definition of "Canadian Program," ensuring accessibility, with ASL signing crews (directors and actors) involved from pre-production to distribution



Recommendation #2

Incentive-Based System for Deaf ASL Professionals

- The CRTC should introduce an incentive system where productions earn additional certification points for hiring Deaf ASL professionals in key creative roles
 - Showrunners
 - Writers
 - Deaf LSQ accessibility consultants



Recommendation #3

Compliance Mechanism for Accessibility Standards

- The CRTC must establish a compliance system to ensure taxpayer-supported programming meets accessibility standards and serves all Canadians, including ASL Deaf communities, aligned with the Accessible Canada Act



Recommendation #4

Feasibility Study for ASL Deaf TV Channel

- The CRTC should fund a feasibility study for a pilot project to establish a ASL Deaf TV broadcasting and streaming channel in Canada
 - Model after the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT), which commissions programs made in BSL for BSL Deaf users



Interview #3



Biography

- CEO of [H3 World TV Network Media Alliance](#)
 - mission is to produce and stream video programming exclusively in International Sign to connect global Deaf communities to each other and the world around us in sign language
- CEO of [DeafDots](#)
 - centralized hub as a signed and captioned video platform collaborating and streaming available information mainly from Deaf communities across Canada



*“Announcements from **sign language-based broadcasters** would provide a platform for updates include:*

- *Accessibility Standards Canada*
- *Accessible Canada Act updates*
- *UN International Day of Sign Languages*
- *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*
- *Accessibility service providers*
- *Federal and Provincial agencies”*



Challenges and Needs

1. Lack of Sign Language Professionals

- Few signing broadcasters, multimedia directors, crews, showrunners, creative directors, vloggers, and streaming service providers across Canada and globally

2. Urgent Information Accessibility

- In official events, broadcasts, and streaming services offering urgent news, health, and emergency information, sign languages and English captioning must be included for full accessibility



Challenges and Needs

3. Timely Access to Information

- Audiovisual media services for urgent news, health, and emergency information need to be accessible to Deaf sign viewers, ensuring they have access to vital updates across Canada and globally



Challenges and Needs

4. Deaf Entertainment Access

- Deaf viewers deserve the right to enjoy Deaf TV entertainment, including news, sports
 - Olympics
 - Deaflympics
 - UN International Day of Sign Languages



Recommendation #1

Regulate Sign Language Inclusion

- The CRTC should require TV and streaming providers to include sign languages in the definition of "Canadian Program," ensuring ASL and LSQ signing crews (directors, actors) are integrated throughout production.



Recommendation #2

Incentive-Based System for Deaf Professionals

- The CRTC should introduce a certification points system that rewards productions employing Deaf ASL and LSQ professionals in key creative roles (showrunners, writers, consultants)



Recommendation #3

Establish Compliance Mechanism

- The CRTC must create mechanisms to ensure taxpayer-funded programming meets accessibility standards and serves ASL and LSQ Deaf communities, aligned with the Accessible Canada Act



Recommendation #4

Fund Pilot Project for Deaf TV Platform

- The CRTC should fund a feasibility study for a Deaf TV broadcasting and streaming platform in Canada, similar to the
 - British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT), which commissions programs made in BSL for BSL Deaf users



Recommendation #5

Fund Deaf Talent Projects

- The CRTC should allocate funding for talent projects that train and hire Deaf consultants, actors, directors, and signing crews to expand the pool of qualified Deaf professionals in TV and streaming industries



Final Recommendation

Based on 3 Interviewees' Recommendations for CRTC to look at the Successful Model of British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT)

- BSLBT commissions television programmes made in British Sign Language - core target audience is Deaf BSL users
- Available to watch on [BSL Zone player](#)



British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT)

- Established in 2008, with Ofcom's approval, to offer an alternative way for commercial broadcasters to meet their regulatory requirements to provide sign language on their qualifying channels
- Please watch the 4 minutes Video Show about the BSLBT here: [About the BSLBT](#)



Final Takeaway



Conclusion

Addressing the Challenges

- A multifaceted approach is necessary to overcome the barriers faced by Deaf communities in media
- Strong regulatory reform is at the core of creating a more inclusive and accessible media landscape



Conclusion

Prioritizing Policy Changes

- Enforce sign language inclusion and accessibility across all media platforms
- Ensure timely and comprehensive access to urgent news, health, and emergency information



Conclusion

Fostering Representation

- Advance for the representation of Deaf communities, especially in critical content areas
- Push for dedicated Deaf TV and streaming platforms to meet the unique needs of the Deaf audience



Conclusion

Empowering Deaf Talent

- Introduce incentives for employing Deaf ASL and LSQ professionals in key creative roles
- Encourage training, recruitment, and development of Deaf talent within the media and broadcasting sectors



Conclusion

The Path Forward

- Regulatory shift will pave the way for a more accessible, inclusive, and diverse media environment for Deaf communities in Canada
- Achieving ASL and LSQ inclusivity requires the collaboration of regulators, media providers, and Deaf advocates



Conclusion

Overall Recommendation #1

- **Modernize Regulations to Include Sign Languages in Canadian Programming**
 - Update CRTC regulations to define ASL and LSQ as core elements of Canadian programming
 - Integrate sign language in content and ensure Deaf professionals are included in all stages of production



Conclusion

Overall Recommendation #2

- **Establish Compliance Mechanisms for Accessibility Standards**
 - Develop clear compliance frameworks to ensure that taxpayer-funded programming and private broadcasters meet accessibility standards, with appropriate captioning, sign language interpretation, and content for Deaf viewers



Conclusion

Overall Recommendation #3

- **Incentivize the Hiring of Deaf Talent in Creative Roles**
 - Implement an incentive-based system to encourage the hiring of Deaf ASL/LSQ professionals in key roles across media production, ensuring Deaf perspectives are embedded in content creation



Conclusion

Overall Recommendation #4

- **Fund Feasibility Study Projects of Pilot Projects for Deaf TV and Streaming Platforms in Canada**
 - Model after successful platforms like the **British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust** (BSLBT)
 - Commission content created by Deaf creators in ASL and LSQ, tailored for Deaf audiences
 - Allocate **\$5 million annually** to support the establishment of pilot projects for Deaf-focused TV channels and streaming platforms in ASL and LSQ

