



Deaf Wireless Consultative Committee

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March 11, 2025

Mr. Marc Morin
Secretary-General
Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)
sec-gen@crtc.gc.ca

VIA EMAIL DISTRIBUTION and GC KEY

Re: BNC CRTC 2025-2

1. Deaf Wireless Canada Consultative Committee - Comité pour les Services Sans fil des Sourds du Canada (DWCC - CSSSC or "DWCC") respectfully submits this final reply in response to [Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2025-2](#). This submission presents DWCC's positions, concerns, and recommendations to improve regulatory policies related to **The Path Forward - Working towards a sustainable Canadian broadcasting system** and sign languages (e.g., ASL/LSQ) accessibility for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing (DDBHH) consumers in Canada.
2. **DWCC** appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and acknowledges the Commission's efforts to strengthen consumer protections. As sign language(s) accessibility advocates, we emphasize that DDBHH consumers face systemic barriers in broadcasting services, particularly in modernizing to include sign languages in the definition of "Canadian program" and addressing critical issues in Canadian programming.
3. **DWCC** would like to respond to several interventions. These interventions include submissions by Disability Screen Office, Accessible Media Inc., Canada Deaf Grassroots Movement, Forum for Research and Policy and Communications, Youth Media Alliance, and Public Interest Advocacy Centre.
4. **DWCC** urges the Commission to require service providers and Canadian broadcasting to ensure equal access for DDBHH communities. This includes public learning of sign languages, in line with the spirit of the Accessible Canada Act and the Canadian Human Rights Act. Specifically, DWCC calls for the recognition of sign language accessibility as a core criterion in defining Canadian programming and developing regulatory requirements to accommodate DDBHH Canadians.
5. **DWCC** is pleased to assist and participate in this proceeding, emphasizing the importance of this consultation in addressing interventions and comments. We advance for recognizing the diverse communities served by Canadian broadcasting, including DDBHH individuals and the promotion of public sign language learning.

About our Committee

6. **DWCC** advocates for the full inclusion of diverse members within the Canadian DDBHH community in Canadian society. The spectrum of DDBHH life experiences, including those that are Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+, range from those with cognitive delay or have neurodiversity, immigrants learning English or French as a second language, those with various degrees of hearing loss, those with the unique “double” disability as Deaf-Blind, and finally native ASL/LSQ users. Additionally, DWCC supports that Indigenous have the right to ask for support, including requesting Indigenous Sign Language interpreters. When DWCC writes DDBHH, it is inclusive of all those with intersectional identities.
7. **DWCC's mandate** is to advocate for accessible wireless communications equity for DDBHH Canadians, including but not limited to:
 - a. Cost-reasonable accessible wireless data plans for ASL and LSQ users for two-way video calls.
 - b. Accessible industry-wide promotions of wireless services and products.
 - c. Removal of disparities in costs of the same accessible wireless products and services within each company.
 - d. Provision of functional equivalent wireless products and services, including wireless applications (apps).
 - e. Accessible wireless emergency services (including emergency alerts and direct text to 911).
 - f. Nationwide public awareness, education and outreach on currently accessible wireless and mobile communication products and services.

Proposed Amended Mandate 2025

- g. Increasing the quality and accessibility of closed captioning via traditional broadcasting and online streaming services
- h. Increasing accessible sign languages in telecommunications, streaming platforms, and broadcasting services
- i. Educate the Commission, telecom services providers, wireless service providers, internet providers, broadcasting service providers, streaming service providers, and innovative service providers about the employability of DDBHH and recruiting, training, hiring and retention of skilled and qualified DDBHH trainees and individuals in the Commission, telecommunications, broadcasting, and streaming industries

INTERVENTIONS

Disability Screen Office (DSO)

8. *There are several issues that are highlighted by this question. The first is broadcasting undertakings owned or controlled by equity-deserving groups. We are not aware of any broadcasting undertakings owned or controlled by disabled Canadians. While we have great respect for AMI-TV and its group of services which add a lot of value to disabled audiences, it is owned by a not-for-profit and its senior leadership and most of its staff, from our understanding, are non-disabled. It does feature programs from creators and*

producers from the disability communities. However, the creators and producers in our communities do not want to be limited to one service or one audience for the content that they create. The DSO is participating in CRTC 2024-288 to share our thoughts on how the Canadian broadcasting system as a whole can better support content for and by disabled Canadians. We refer you to our submission and ongoing participation in the consultation.

- 9.** *DSO would like disabled Canadians to have the opportunity to develop their own broadcasting undertakings, to give full and authentic voice to the disability communities, thereby enhancing the diversity of voices within the Canadian broadcasting system. Broadcasting undertakings owned and controlled by disabled Canadians might provide more career opportunities to disabled Canadians within the broadcaster as well as providing a greater understanding of the audience. However, as a frequently marginalized community that faces a range of accessibility and financial barriers, disabled Canadians do not have the same access to the financial resources and commercial partnerships needed to launch a new broadcaster. The employment rate amongst people with disabilities is only 47%, compared to 66% for those without disabilities. It is challenging to gather the resources needed to found a broadcaster when being employed is the first hurdle many have to overcome.*
- 10.** *The CRTC could be supportive of new broadcasting undertakings owned and controlled by disabled Canadians by establishing a regulatory framework in advance that would provide such a service with mandatory carriage comparable to that enjoyed now or in the future by AMI-TV. The rate would need to be established but the knowledge that such a service would not have to negotiate for carriage with each broadcasting distribution undertaking would help minimize the risk in launching a new service.*
- 11. DWCC** fully supports DSO's position on the need for broadcasting undertakings owned and controlled by Canadian people with disabilities. Authentic representation in the Canadian broadcasting system is essential, yet there are currently no disability-led broadcasters, including DDBHH ones. While AMI-TV provides valuable programming; however, creators and producers from the disability communities deserve broader opportunities. Financial and accessibility barriers prevent Canadian people with disabilities from establishing their own broadcasters.
- 12. DWCC** urges the CRTC to develop a regulatory framework that ensures mandatory carriage for disability-led broadcasters, reducing financial risks and fostering a truly inclusive media landscape. This includes ensuring that DDBHH Canadians who use American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) as their primary language can establish the world's second sign-language based commissioning body in the world, modeled after [LumoTV](#). We stand with DSO in advocating for a more equitable and representative broadcasting system.

Accessible Media Inc (AMI)

- 13.** *Given their nature, services that currently benefit from a 9.1(1)(h) order should be given mandatory carriage rights on VBDUs pursuant to the Commission's powers*

under section 9.1(1)(i). Other services could also be afforded such treatment. However, in terms of compensation, for the reasons outlined below, AMI is recommending a specific fund be designated to support existing 9.1(1)(h) services that benefit from distribution on basic with a regulated fee.

- 14.** *As AMI noted in its submission relating to BNC 2024-288, section 9.1(1)(i) states that distribution orders imposed on VBDUs must be without terms or conditions. In other words, the Commission can force an online undertaking to distribute a particular service, but cannot specify at what rate, if any, such distribution would occur. As a result, VBDUs cannot be required by the Commission to carry public interest services at a set rate.*
- 15.** *While the Commission can require VBDUs to negotiate terms of carriage in “good faith” with services that must be carried pursuant to a section 9.1(1)(i) order, that is unlikely to result in fair compensation for public interest services, which require wide distribution and compensation from a large portion of a provider’s base. Many VBDUs, like Amazon Prime Video Channels, offer services on an a la carte basis. There is no package akin to basic. As a result, a subscriber only pays for what it chooses to purchase. Furthermore, even if VBDUs begin offering a basic-like package (such as what Rogers Xfinity App TV product does), the Commission cannot force terms of carriage that are comparable to what it requires under a 9.1(1)(h) order.*
- 16.** *Instead, the Act envisions a different compensation regime for public interest services by online undertakings. Section 11.1(1)(b.1) provides that the Commission may make regulations respecting expenditures to be made by broadcasting undertakings, including online undertakings, that support:
“ . . . broadcasting undertakings offering programming services that, in the Commission’s opinion, are of exceptional importance to the achievement of the objectives of the broadcasting policy set out in Subsection 3(1).”*
- 17.** *It is clear that Parliament wanted to ensure that 9.1(1)(h) services, which, as noted, by definition make an exceptional contribution to Canadian broadcasting policy See: objectives, continued to be supported as the broadcasting system evolves. In fact, in the Policy Direction issued to the CRTC in late 2023, the Commission was directed to consider how to contribute to the sustainability of services of exceptional importance and, when exercising its powers under Section 11.1 of the Act, to support these undertakings.*
- 18.** *Therefore, based on the foregoing, AMI is proposing that as part of the proposed new regulatory framework, an obligation be imposed on foreign online undertakings to support services that currently benefit from 9.1(1)(h) distribution and have a regulated fee, by directing funds to a third-party fund for services of exceptional importance. This funding would help to compensate for lost revenue caused by “cord cutting” and better position public interest services for success as BDU subscriber revenues continue to decline. AMI submits that without this type of support, the services it provides and others like them, will no longer be sustainable.*

19. *With respect to the quantum, AMI submits that the Commission is in a better position to determine the appropriate percentage as it has access to more granular data relating to the revenues of contributing foreign audio-visual online undertakings operating in Canada.*
20. **DWCC** supports the proposal to ensure continued financial support for public interest services that currently benefit from 9.1(1)(h) distribution. As the broadcasting landscape shifts, it is crucial to sustain these services, which play an essential role in achieving Canada's broadcasting policy objectives.
21. We recognize the limitations of section 9.1(1)(i), which prevents the CRTC from imposing specific compensation terms on VBDUs. Given the rise of à la carte offerings and the decline of traditional BDU subscriptions, a new funding model is necessary to maintain the viability of services of exceptional importance.
22. **DWCC** agrees that a dedicated third-party fund, supported by contributions from foreign online undertakings under section 11.1(1)(b.1), is a logical and fair solution. This would help offset revenue losses from cord-cutting while ensuring that critical public interest programming remains accessible. We urge the CRTC to consider this framework to safeguard the sustainability of these essential services.

Canada Deaf Grassroots Movement (CDGM)

23. *CDGM recommends that ensuring equal access to data is critical for fostering a fair, competitive, and inclusive broadcasting system that supports linguistic and cultural diversity—including the recognition and promotion of ASL/LSQ as primary languages for DDIHHDB individuals in Canada.*
24. **DWCC** supports CDGM's position that there must be recognition and promotion of ASL and LSQ as the primary languages for DDBHH Canadians in the Canadian broadcasting system. Additionally, Indigenous Sign Languages (ISLs) must be acknowledged and supported as part of Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity, ensuring access for Indigenous **DDBHH** communities, where possible.
25. **DWCC** would like to respectfully disagree with the acronym that the **CDGM** has come up with. From our Indigenous Deaf consultant, we have learned it is proper to put Indigenous before Deaf, because Indigenous people are Indigenous first before they are Deaf in identity, and **DWCC** members were taught it was disrespectful to put the word of Deaf before Indigenous. Deaf-Blind members have also advised us that Deaf-Blind comes right after Deaf because many DeafBlind identify as Deaf before they are Blind and value being a part of the Deaf community, therefore the proper acronym is **DDBHH** that was consulted by members of Deaf-Blind community members and our Indigenous Deaf member. Again, the Committee reiterates that when **DWCC** writes **DDBHH**, it is inclusive of all those with intersectional identities, based on our professional consultants.

Forum for Research and Policy in Communications (FRPC)

26. *Recommendation 1 In making determinations about 2025-2 the CRTC should ensure that any of the changes it proposes ensure that implementation of the Broadcasting*

Policy for Canada their first priority – and only then consider whether different tools could or should be used to regulate existing and prospective broadcasters

- 27.** *Recommendation 2 The CRTC should publish long-term data describing programming, financial and employment characteristics of the sectors it regulates, to correct errors on the record and to provide the public, Parliament and broadcasters with objective information with which to evaluate the implementation of Parliament's broadcasting policy for Canada.*
- 28. DWCC** supports the FRPC in its recommendations for CRTC 2025-2 to uphold transparency, accountability, and the prioritization of Canada's Broadcasting Policy. Regulatory changes should align with the public interest and accessibility mandates, ensuring that media services reflect linguistic and cultural diversity, including ASL and LSQ content.
- 29. DWCC** supports FRPC's call for evidence-based policymaking. This would ensure that accessibility is a forethought but a fundamental part of Canada's broadcasting future. For DDBHH Canadians, this means broadcasting policies must prioritize full and equal access to content in both ASL and LSQ. Accessibility should be integrated from the outset, not treated as an afterthought. Canada can create a more inclusive broadcasting system that truly serves all of its citizens.

Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)

30. *PIAC recommends that the Commission should consider undertaking and publishing similar research that aligns with the modernized broadcasting framework after the passing of the Online Streaming Act (formerly Bill C-11) to better understand the evolving broadcasting market as well as representation and portrayal of diversity within this market.*

31. *Considerations should be made for consumers facing different disabilities in setting out any standards and measures to improve access to Canadian content. The feedback received in the recently concluded accessibility proceedings on closed captioning as well as described video and audio description services should be reviewed and integrated in any resulting policy in this regard.*

32. *The Commission should also consider how the promotion and discoverability of content from equity seeking groups and all other diverse communities and groups could be integrated in the resulting policy. We might also explore this issue at a later stage of this proceeding.*

- 33. DWCC** fully supports **PIAC's** recommendations for the CRTC to conduct and publish research that aligns with the modernized broadcasting framework following the Online Streaming Act. This research must prioritize accessibility, ensuring full access to ASL and LSQ first and foremost. Additionally, the CRTC must ensure content from equity-seeking groups, including ASL and LSQ creators and disability-focused media, is discoverable and promoted across platforms. Evidence-based policymaking is key to an inclusive and accessible broadcasting future.

Rogers Communications Inc

- 34.** *Rogers also recognizes that there are unique challenges and sensitivities when it comes to data collection regarding Indigenous peoples, members of OLMCs, members of equity-deserving groups, and other Canadians of diverse backgrounds, including those from diverse ethnic and cultural communities. As noted in the research report published by the Racial Equity Media Collective in 2021, in Canada's film and television industry, the "creation and implementation of an effective data collection, monitoring, and reporting system [regarding racebased data] has been challenging for several reasons, including limitations due to privacy regulation and intricacies in the use of language and cultural and personal sensitivities." The report also noted unique challenges with respect to self-identification for Indigenous communities and highlighted that the ISO "is actively developing best practices that better define, vet, protect, and value Racial Equity Media Collective, "Evaluating Racial Equity in Canada's Screen Sector" (25 November 2021), page 26 (re-mc.org) (Racial Equity Media Collective Report). Rogers Communications Inc. Intervention in BNC 2025-2 Indigenous identify."25 These issues will need to be carefully addressed before the Commission implements any new data collection aimed at the groups and communities identified in Question 7.*
- 35. DWCC** is deeply concerned that Rogers Communications Inc.'s intervention fails to address accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, including DDBHH Canadians. Accessibility is not a secondary issue. It is a fundamental right that must be integrated into any regulatory framework for data collection and media representation.
- 36. DWCC** urges the Commission to reject any regulatory framework that does not explicitly address accessibility and to require mandatory inclusion of DDBHH data in all future broadcasting equity reports. This includes, but is not limited to:
- a. Accessibility Metrics - tracking ASL and LSQ programming availability and disability, including DDBHH, representation across all media platforms
 - b. Address Accessibility Barriers - ensure DDBHH individuals are consulted in data collection processes and that privacy regulations are not to be used as an excuse for inaction
 - c. Enforce Accountability for Accessibility Gaps - hold entities accountable for their role in ensuring full access to broadcasting services for DDBHH Canadians

BCE Inc.

- 37.** *Given that traditional broadcasters will have significantly greater Canadian programming spending requirements than foreign streamers, we believe that foreign streamers should have an offsetting obligation to promote the discoverability of Canadian and Indigenous content that is aired by licensed Canadian programming undertakings and their affiliated streamers. This offsetting obligation would require foreign streamers to promote all Canadian content, and not just the Canadian content available on their own services. Moreover, foreign streamers would be required to promote this content to the same extent (i.e., no less prominent) that they do their own content. This requirement is similar to the existing regime for local availabilities (i.e., "local avails"), whereby a Canadian licensee may insert certain promotional material as a substitute for the local avails (i.e., non-Canadian advertising material) of authorized non-Canadian programming services. Local avails are for use by licensed Canadian programming services to promote their original Canadian programs among other things. To*

operationalize this regulatory requirement, Canadian broadcasters and producers would provide the promotions to foreign streamers and they would ensure that the promotions are made available on a schedule that is no less prominent than the foreign streamers' in-house promotions.

- 38. DWCC** is deeply concerned that BCE Inc.'s intervention fails to address accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, including DDBHH Canadians. Accessibility is not a secondary issue. It is a fundamental right that must be integrated into any regulatory framework for data collection and media representation.
- 39.** While BCE emphasizes the promotion of Canadian and Indigenous content by foreign streamers, it completely overlooks the need to ensure accessibility in this promotion. Any discoverability requirements must explicitly include ASL and LSQ content and ensure that promotional materials are fully accessible to DDBHH audiences.
- 40. DWCC** urges the Commission to reject any regulatory framework that fails to explicitly address accessibility and does not recognize ASL and LSQ as the primary languages of Deaf persons in Canada. Additionally, DWCC calls for requiring foreign streamers and Canadian broadcasters to prioritize full accessibility in all promotional and discoverability obligations.

Telus Communications Inc.

- 41.** *Lack of access to other features and functionalities, such as the metadata that is associated with content, can also restrict the ability of independent distributors to effectively showcase Canadian and Indigenous productions. For example, metadata detailing production and cast information for programs can be used to create better search functions and recommendations for customers, allowing distributors to develop specialized Canadian and Indigenous content sections, implement recommendations prioritizing Canadian and Indigenous productions, or create thematic collections showcasing Canadian and Indigenous storytelling.*
- 42. DWCC** is deeply concerned that Telus Communications Inc.'s intervention fails to address accessibility issues for persons with disabilities, including DDBHH Canadians.
- 43.** While Telus highlights the importance of metadata for improving content discoverability, it completely ignores accessibility metadata—a critical factor in ensuring ASL and LSQ programming, captioning, and described video are searchable and easily discoverable by DDBHH audiences.
- 44. DWCC** urges the Commission to reject any regulatory framework that does not explicitly address accessibility metadata and to mandate the inclusion of accessibility data to ensure the full participation of DDBHH Canadians in the broadcasting ecosystem.

Other

- 45.** The Commission, Big Tech companies (such as Apple, Amazon, and Google) and media giants such as (Netflix and Disney+) continue to overlook people with disabilities, accessibility issues, and access to information and communications. This includes the lack of recognition of sign languages (ASL/LSQ) within the broadcasting industries within

the definition of Canadian Content Culture. The Path Forward framework fails to include sign language accessibility (ASL and LSQ) for DDBHH Canadians, contradicting the spirit of the Accessible Canada Act.

LumoTV (Formerly British Sign Language Board Trust - (BSLBT))

46. [LumoTV](#), formerly the British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust, commissions television programmes that highlight Deaf and sign language communities. Established in 2008, it provides commercial broadcasters with an alternative way to provide sign language content. LumoTV is *“proud to be the only sign language-based commissioning body in the world.”*
47. BSLBT rebrands to LumoTV, calling itself the ‘lighthouse in Deaf media’ The British Sign Language Broadcasting Trust (BSLBT) has changed its name to LumoTV with the aim of becoming the *“go-to destination for fresh, diverse, and innovative content that celebrates and connects with Deaf and sign language communities everywhere”*. Founded in 2008, the organization commissions BSL content for its BSL Zone website, offering shows to broadcasters to help them meet Ofcom’s signed programming requirements.
48. Under the watchdog’s code on television access services, broadcasters must provide sign language interpretation for at least 5% of their entire programming per year. Alongside BSL Zone, programmes are also shown on Film4 and Together TV (formerly known as The Community Channel). Popular shows available on the streaming site include gameshow *Sign2Win*, the magazine programme *This Is Deaf* and the award-winning film *Here / Not Here*.
49. The brand’s soft launch took place at a Channel 4 event in London on Thursday, March 6, 2025, with the full launch set for early 2025. Under the rebrand, both the BSLBT and BSL Zone going forward will be known as **LumoTV**.
50. **DWCC** strongly recommends that the Commission establish the world’s second sign language-based commissioning body, after LumoTV, the British Sign Language-based broadcaster. This initiative, in line with *The Path Forward -Working towards a sustainable Canadian broadcasting system* would strengthen and enrich diversity in Canada by ensuring greater representation of ASL and LSQ in media.
51. **DWCC** proposes conducting a feasibility study to explore the potential of establishing a sign language-based commissioning body in Canada. This study would evaluate funding models, regulatory frameworks, and content production strategies to ensure a sustainable and impactful initiative. The Commission should formally recommend initiating this study as part of this proceeding. Its findings could guide policy development and lay the foundation for meaningful investment in sign language-based broadcasting in Canada.
52. **DWCC** proclaims: Let’s create a truly accessible and inclusive **“Coast to Coast to Coast: Lighthouse in Deaf Media”** across Canada!

Participation in the proceeding and public hearings on May 12, 2025

- 53. DWCC** trusts that it has accumulated sufficient evidence regarding its accessibility group to significantly and meaningfully contribute to the proceeding. Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2025-2. Call for comments - The Path Forward – Working towards a sustainable Canadian broadcasting system. We wish to appear at the public hearing, in person in Gatineau, in order to elaborate on our positions expressed herein.
- 54. DWCC** appreciates the Commission's consideration of its intervention, and the supporting evidence provided in this document.
- 55.** Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Beatty, Chair
Deaf Wireless Canada Consultative Committee -
Comité pour les Services Sans fil des Sourds du Canada (DWCC-CSSSC)

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