



December 3, 2020

Mr. Claude Doucet
Secretary General
Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2

Dear Mr. Doucet:

Re. Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2019-392. Described video of prime time programming broadcast by the services of Bell Media Inc., Corus Entertainment Inc. and Rogers Sports & Media Inc. – Progress Report

Bell Media Inc. (Bell), Corus Entertainment Inc. (Corus) and Rogers Sports & Media Inc. (Rogers) (collectively, the Broadcasters) are pleased to submit our report on the progress made by the licensees to address the issues involved in fulfilling the condition of licence that requires certain prime time programming to be broadcast with described video.

The Broadcasters have made significant operational and technological investments to improve the user experience for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted. Since September 2019, the amount of described programming on Canadian television has increased exponentially. That increase began with the Broadcasters' efforts and investments in 2019.

In BRP 2019-392, the Commission recognized the practical realities of the program delivery process and the difficulties faced by the Broadcasters in describing late-arriving programming. Some American prime time programs received by the Broadcasters without DV already in place are delivered only shortly before they are scheduled for broadcast. In those cases, the Broadcasters may not have sufficient time within which to produce a DV version of the program in time for its original air date. As such, the Commission specifically approved an exception whereby US programs delivered within 24 hours of their broadcast date and time are not required to be described for that broadcast.

While the Broadcasters cannot guarantee that all of the required programming in prime time is available in described video, we remain focused on maximizing the amount of

described programming made available in the Canadian broadcasting system and have continued to make great strides.

In our first report dated 3 June 2020, the Broadcasters indicated the development of a 3-part process going forward:

- (1) Community Consultations
- (2) Development of a Described Video Working Group
- (3) Reporting to the CRTC

Since then, the structure of this process has been more formalized. Following our first meeting on November 23, the DV Working Group agreed to meet on a quarterly basis. As such, that group will meet a minimum of four times per year. Following two of those meetings, and on a bi-annual basis, we will organize community consultations, to provide updates about the availability of DV content as well as summaries of discussions at the Working Group level. Each of these community consultations will also provide an opportunity for questions and answers with everyone on the call.

Described Video Working Group Meeting

Date: Friday, October 23, 2020

Time: 11am to 12:30pm (Eastern time)

The Broadcasters initiated the formation of a Working Group to review and discuss issues of concern on a going forward basis. The Working Group is comprised of four representatives from the Broadcasters and six individuals involved in various community organizations.

Appendix A provides a list of the members of the Working Group. Its mandate is to:

Address the issues requiring the temporary 24-hour exemption to providing described video for prime time programming, and to consider and explore solutions informed by described video best practices, innovations and new technologies.

The initial Working Group meeting was held on October 23, 2020 with all Broadcaster members and community organization members present. As this was the inaugural meeting, the focus was on providing members with background information on why the DV exemption was initially requested, and the progress made to date by the Broadcasters. Thus, the first portion of the meeting reviewed the different types of programming offered by the Broadcasters and those that make the best use of described video. We then highlighted the potential hurdles involved in describing some of the programs we receive from the United States, as they may be received within hours of their broadcast date and time. The Broadcasters also outlined the program buying process, emphasizing our interest in obtaining as much US content as possible with described video already imbedded, but our difficulties in mandating its availability as part of any negotiation process with distributors. We also outlined our experimentation with the “near-live” description of certain US programs, acknowledging the challenges involved

with not having sufficient time to review, script and record content, using the established described video production process.

The Broadcasters then asked the Working Group members about the most appropriate method of establishing contact points for community members to communicate with the Broadcasters directly about any concerns or issues they may have with described video on our stations and services. It was agreed that the most effective method would be for Broadcasters to provide contact information that would then be distributed to community organizations. Since then, the Broadcasters have established dedicated corporate email addresses for exactly that purpose.

- Bell Media: DV@bellmedia.ca
- Corus Entertainment: DVatCorus@corusent.com
- Rogers Media: describedvideo@rci.rogers.com

These email addresses have subsequently been distributed to community members via a newsletter from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (the CNIB), and the next Working Group session will include discussion of other means of ensuring blind and partially-sighted Canadians are aware of these specific feedback mechanisms.

A Working Group member asked about the availability of described programming from other Canadian stations and services. The Broadcasters subsequently noted that similar DV requirements and prime time US program exceptions were being considered for other stations such as CHCH-DT (Hamilton), CHEK-DT (Victoria) and CJON-TV (St. John's). Following the similar CRTC decisions for other Broadcasters, we reached out to representatives of those stations to inform them of our efforts with both the Working Group and the Community Consultations. As a result, in the Community Consultation that followed a few weeks later on November 23, 2020 a representative from CHCH-DT (Hamilton) was able to join the Broadcasters, and was introduced to community members on the audio/video call.

Community Consultation

Date: Monday, November 23, 2020

Time: 1pm to 2:30pm (Eastern time)

The CNIB hosted another community consultation involving members of the blind or partially sighted community. Much like the prior forums, the Community Consultation provided another opportunity for the Broadcasters to update participants on our efforts to date to increase the amount of programming available with described video during prime time. Approximately 80 members of the community joined the tele-town hall.

The Broadcasters were pleased to hear directly from the participants about their appreciation for the progress made since September 2019 and the significant increase in described video programming now available to them. The town-hall question and answer format was productive and provided valuable insights from users of described video

content. Of note, participants were more interested in discussing quality of live and near-live DV for programming that the Broadcasters have been describing in short turn-around times, rather than a lack of DV. Participants also provided illuminating examples of technical barriers to accessibility and difficulties they experienced in contacting their service providers. The Broadcasters highlighted the availability of dedicated service representatives for exactly these kinds of technical issues and committed to expanding the contact information provided to the CNIB and other community organizations to also include these more specific points of contact.

Going forward, the Broadcasters will continue to hold bi-annual consultations with the described video user community. Each consultation will be held prior to the preparation of the Broadcasters' report to the Commission, and following a meeting of the DV Working Group. In that way, the Commission will be provided with insight as to the comments expressed by that community at the most recent consultation.

Reporting to the CRTC

Our report is a joint submission by Corus, Rogers and Bell, in accordance with the encouragements and requirements set out by the Commission in BRP 2019-392. We will continue to file reports of this nature to the Commission in June and December of each year.

The Broadcasters continue to keep comprehensive reports, detailing the receipt date of those American programs required to air with described video in prime time but received without described video. Also included in these reports is the date those programs are repeated (if applicable) and confirmation that those repeats were described. These reports will be included with each of the respective Broadcaster's licence renewal applications, to provide a basis upon which to evaluate and discuss our fulfillment of the Commission's objective of expanding the amount of described video content available to blind or partially sighted Canadians.

Conclusion

The Broadcasters have made significant steps to decrease the amount of time required to add described video to programming arriving from the United States without described video and within 24 hours of its scheduled premiere. Our improvements in this regard have been recognized by members of the blind or partially sighted community via their participation in two CNIB-hosted consultations, and has enabled our discussions to evolve into explorations of quality concerns and broader statements about technological barriers to access. The Broadcasters hope to further expand our conversations into these broader areas in subsequent Community Consultations following their initial review with members of the Working Group.

Subsequent Working Group sessions will begin focusing on issues raised in the Community Consultations and how best to address them, and the Broadcasters look forward to gaining insights from its members on these issues and how to further improve

the provision of DV for U.S. prime time programming that arrives within 24 hours of broadcast. Additionally, we anticipate that the direct comments we will receive via our individual dedicated email addresses will provide ancillary valuable and actionable feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alain Strati', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alain Strati

Assistant General Counsel, Regulatory Affairs
Bell Media Inc.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karen Gifford', with a cursive script.

Karen Gifford

Sr. Director, Regulatory Compliance and Licencing
Corus Entertainment Inc.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Calla Dewdney', with a cursive script, set against a light blue rectangular background.

Calla Dewdney

Sr. Manager, Regulatory Media
Rogers Sports & Media

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Appendix A – Described Video Working Group

Broadcasters

Calla Dewdney - Rogers Sports & Media

Karen Gifford - Corus Entertainment

Michael Menard - Corus Entertainment

Alain Strati - Bell Media

Community Organizations and Individuals

David Errington - President & CEO, Accessible Media Inc.

Louise Gillis – President of the National Board of Directors, Canadian Council of the Blind

Tim Nolan

Antoine Perrault - Executive Director, Regroupement des aveugles et amblyopes du Québec

Gary Steeves - Member of the National Board of Directors, CNIB

Marcia Yale – President of the National Board of Directors, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians