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Closed Caption Monitoring Report 2012 - 2014

NTV has undertaken the mandated closed caption monitoring as required by CRTC 2012-362.

NTV has discovered, to the best of its ability to date, that of the programs monitored, in general closed captioning services provided live by The Caption Group Inc. seem to meet the criteria for accuracy of spelling, quality (reasonable placement on Screen), consistency, and lag of closed captions compared to the spoken word..

The average accuracy of captioning in the spot checks we've examined is the order of 92 percent, with latency of no more than 5-6 seconds. The captioning is not within the recommended guidelines, however the monitoring process also introduces inaccuracies, but we cannot be sure of the extent.

NTV has experienced some technical issues, but hopefully these have been overcome. The main problem was with respect to the persons doing the captioning accessing our encoder. The occasional lock up of our encoder has been experienced. But with more consistent rebooting of the unit, this seems to be resolved.

Another issue concerned the placement on screen of the captions so that they did not cover existing character generation. NTV and the caption group worked to resolve this, and this now seems to be acceptable.

We have noted many spelling mistakes, but these generally relate to specific place names, or odd terminology. This is to be expected and is acceptable according to what we understand. However, to avoid this, where possible, the caption group is provided with this information in advance.

We have noted that the more complicated the issue being discussed, that greater mistakes are possible. In addition, the longer the captioner is on line, the greater the possibility for mistakes to occur.

It has been noted by our staff, that captioners tend to paraphrase what they hear when doing live captions. The word for word accuracy is therefore lacking. But

we also note that the sense of what has been said is generally satisfactory. This is an extremely difficult issue to overcome.

Some captioners are more accurate than others. The previous example is proof of that. NTV staff have noticed this and recently reported it.

Since we only sample monitor those programs which we produce the captioning for, programs from other with captioning are presumed to have been monitored by the program provider. Example: network programs or productions from others with captioning included.

In our view, captioning is still not an exact science. Over the past two years we have experienced very mixed results with the monitoring process. The process is a work in progress, to say the least.

In NTV's view the monitoring of closed captioning is more difficult than the actual captioning, and a very time consuming endeavor, especially when our newscasts are not 100% scripted, as ours are.

The results obtained from monitoring vary widely because the methods are not conducive to accuracy. As the Commission knows, it requires first counting the spoken words and then counting the captioned words, and making a comparison to the caption text. It is extremely easy to make errors in counting. In NTV's view, the industry as not yet found a satisfactory solution to this problem making it extremely difficult for consistently accurate reporting.

Recently we found out that our logger provided by Volicon has a way to export the captioning to a text file with a word count. This lessens the actual counting process, and produces a hard copy of the captions text, which can then be used for comparison.

The spoken word however remains challenging, it is almost impossible to accurately count the words. The slightest distraction and the count is lost, making may repeat counts necessary. We have also discovered inconsistency from one count to another of the same material. Making results questionable. Further, the longer the program, of course the greater the number errors in counting, making results very questionable. To resolve this we are currently experimenting speech recognition software. But results are inconsistent so far.

A one hour program can easily take a person working alone, at a minimum 1 full day, if they don't have to repeat their work. We can't afford this waste of manpower. In an organization such as NTV, every man hour counts. Our staff is small and each person must be utilized in the most productive way. This monitoring process is not efficient.

NTV believes that other broadcasters must also be reporting similar problems.

While the system proposed may seem fine on paper, in practicality it is really not a workable method that can be relied upon to give the desired results. We suggest that the Commission staff try to do this and report their results. We doubt their comments will be any different.

NTV requests that the Commission reconsider this matter related to monitoring as a great deal more work in this area is required to find a satisfactory method.

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