



Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2006-77

Ottawa, 19 June 2006

Commission's response to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' final report on the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming

In this notice, the Commission examines and responds to the final report of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters on the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming.

Introduction

1. In *Introduction to Broadcasting Decisions CRTC 2004-6 to 2004-27 renewing the licences of 22 specialty services*, Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2004-2, 21 January 2004 (Public Notice 2004-2), the Commission raised the issue of the limited on-air presence of broadcasting industry employees falling within certain of the four groups designated under the *Employment Equity Act*, these four groups being women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities. More specifically, the Commission noted that far too few on-air positions are filled by Aboriginal persons or persons with disabilities.
2. In Public Notice 2004-2, the Commission expected licensees to ensure that the on-air presence of members of each of the four designated groups is reflective of Canadian society, and that members of these groups are presented fairly, accurately and in a manner that is non-stereotypical. In particular, the Commission emphasized the role that broadcasters can play in helping to create and reinforce positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities, and identified the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities to be a matter in need of thorough investigation by the broadcasting industry. The Commission therefore called upon the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) to develop and file an action plan outlining the process it proposed be followed to examine issues surrounding the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming.
3. The Commission also stated in its notice that ongoing initiatives on the part of Canadian broadcasters to make programming more reflective and inclusive of Canada's cultural diversity can, in many cases, be extended or adapted to ensure fair, balanced and inclusive reflection and representation of persons with disabilities. Accordingly, the Commission called upon all broadcasters to incorporate persons with disabilities into their cultural diversity corporate planning.

4. The CAB's Joint Societal Issues Committee (JSIC) includes members from all sectors of the broadcasting industry and is responsible for dealing with social policy issues affecting the industry. In response to Public Notice 2004-2, the JSIC undertook a number of consultations and background research to develop an Action Plan for the CAB. The Action Plan was set out in *A Submission to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission With Respect to Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2004-2*, 16 August 2004.
5. In a letter dated 15 November 2004 to the CAB, the Commission expressed its satisfaction with the proposed strategy set out in the CAB's Action Plan, and established a number of expectations to be met by the CAB in conducting its research and preparing its subsequent report. In particular, the Commission expected the CAB to develop industry expertise with respect to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, both on air and behind the scenes, and to develop solid relationships with disability communities in order to maximize the development of relevant and workable solutions. The Commission also stressed the need for the CAB to conduct, at minimum, consultations with persons with disabilities and to do its utmost to ensure that persons with disabilities were contributing members of the CAB's JSIC and its Outreach Committee. Further, the Commission emphasized the need for specific solutions, such as the creation of educational tools for both broadcasters and persons with disabilities, the development of a multi-faceted recruitment strategy, and the development of a concrete portrayal strategy.
6. Subsequently, while the CAB pursued its work in these areas, the Commission issued *Commission's response to the report of the Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television*, Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2005-24, 21 March 2005 (Public Notice 2005-24). The Task Force Report was the culmination of an earlier initiative sponsored by the CAB in response to a call by the Commission, in *Representation of cultural diversity on television – Creation of an industry/community task force*, Public Notice CRTC 2001-88, 2 August 2001 (Public Notice 2001-88), for industry-sponsored research to identify "best practices", and help define the issues and present practical means for ensuring the accurate reflection and portrayal by broadcasters of the diverse groups they serve.
7. In Public Notice 2005-24, the Commission noted that a review by the industry of its existing codes and standards governing acceptable content would be an important step towards ensuring that the self-regulatory system is in tune with, and effective in responding to, the concerns of Canada's visible minority and Aboriginal communities regarding their portrayal on Canadian television, as identified in the Task Force's report. The Commission expected the CAB to report on its findings with respect to its review of industry codes by no later than 21 July 2005.
8. In July 2005, the CAB requested an extension to the deadline for the filing of its review of industry codes in order to complete its research study of issues concerning the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming, and to allow the CAB to also take into consideration any concerns relating

to reflection and portrayal of persons with disabilities arising from the research in its review of existing codes. The Commission approved the CAB's request for an extension. On 23 December 2005, the CAB filed its report entitled *CAB Review of Industry Codes – Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2005-24*.

9. The CAB's final report in response to Public Notice 2004-2 is dated 16 September 2005 and entitled *The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming* (the report). The report was informed by the findings of a three-part qualitative research project conducted by CONNECTUS Consulting Inc. (CONNECTUS) on the state of the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in the programming of Canada's privately-owned television services. The report includes these findings, and presents various initiatives, tools and recommendations proposed by the CAB for its use, and others proposed for use by its members and by its industry partners. In the following sections of the current notice, the Commission examines each of these components in turn, with a focus on the report's key findings. The appendix to this notice provides summaries of the report's recommendations, tools and initiatives.

The report

Research

10. CONNECTUS' three-part research initiative, conducted between 15 May 2005 and 18 August 2005, included the collection and analysis of qualitative evidence concerning the issues, barriers and potential tools or initiatives respecting the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming. The three parts of the research were: one-on-one interviews; a stakeholder forum; and best practices research and analysis.
11. CONNECTUS held one-on-one interviews with representatives from non-government organizations representing persons with disabilities (disability NGOs), persons with disabilities within the broadcasting sector, government officials, senior managers in the broadcasting industry and representatives of the Canadian production sector. It also conducted a stakeholder forum on 15 July 2005 in Toronto, which brought together 20 disability NGOs, broadcasters, performers and producers in a facilitated discussion of issues, barriers, tools and initiatives. Finally, CONNECTUS undertook its best practices research and analysis, focusing on broadcasting industry initiatives and industry-related initiatives in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.
12. CONNECTUS used the term "persons with disabilities" throughout its study to refer to individuals with sensory (hearing, vision, speech), mobility, learning, and psychological and/or intellectual developmental disabilities. In this way, both "visible" and "invisible" disabilities, as well as persons with acquired disabilities or with multiple disabilities, were included in the study. CONNECTUS noted that the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), undertaken by the federal government in 2001, identified

3.6 million Canadians as living with a disability. CONNECTUS explained, however, that there is general agreement that this number is much larger, since not all persons with disabilities would have identified themselves as such in completing the survey.

Research findings

13. In general, persons with disabilities rank below the population as a whole on measurements relating to education, employment and income. According to CONNECTUS' research, this reality is also reflected in the broadcasting industry, where persons with disabilities, while accounting for at least 12.4% of the general population, make up less than 2% of the workforce. CONNECTUS found that the significant underemployment experienced by persons with disabilities is largely attributable to attitudes that undervalue their skills and abilities. Where adequate measures to improve inclusion and access have been made, however, persons with disabilities have revealed themselves to be as capable as anyone in their pursuit of education and their performance as employees.
14. Persons with disabilities questioned by CONNECTUS cited several key barriers to their full participation in society, including barriers to their ability to obtain education, employment and a reasonable income, and to participate in leisure and recreational pursuits. These barriers come in a variety of forms, including attitudes towards persons with disabilities, issues of access and accommodation, and marginalization through stereotyping.
15. Many persons with disabilities suggested that there are attitudes permeating all areas of Canadian society that serve as enormous barriers to inclusion. According to these survey participants, a view generally prevails among Canadians that persons with disabilities are incapable of performing, either in school or on the job, at levels that measure up to the levels achieved by those without disabilities. There was also a general sense among participants that the general public has little understanding of what life is like for persons with disabilities, and that many employers mistakenly believe that hiring persons with disabilities is expensive and that persons with disabilities are a "burden" in the workplace.
16. Lack of access, in a general sense, was viewed as a significant obstacle. However, persons with disabilities considered the lack of physical access to shops and other buildings, and the lack of access to information (due, for example, to the failure to use alternative formats for the presentation of information routinely included in pamphlets and job application forms), to be particularly serious problems. This failure to adequately accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities was cited as a significant barrier. Such accommodation was defined in its broadest sense as including the provision of ramps, wider doorways and hallways, as well as the use of adaptive technologies such as special computer software, and the provision of on-site interpretation for the Deaf, deafened and/or hard of hearing. Stigmatization and stereotyping of persons with

disabilities, and their consequent marginalization, were also cited as barriers. Examples offered by participants from their experiences were of their being perceived as objects of pity, treated as sharing the same attributes and characteristics no matter what their disability or its severity may be, or depicted as “heroically overcoming” a disability.

17. According to research participants, each of the above attitudes described by them as constituting barriers to access and inclusion, and as generally present within Canadian society as a whole, are likewise generally present within the broadcasting industry. To varying degrees, and as discussed below, research participants also considered that a conscientious and concerted effort on the part of broadcasters to increase the on-air portrayal of persons with disabilities and promote their participation in other aspects of the industry would help to eliminate those societal barriers to access and inclusion.

On-air presence of persons with disabilities in television programming

18. According to CONNECTUS, almost without exception, respondents in consultations and participants at the stakeholder forum agreed that persons with disabilities have an extremely limited on-air presence in all types of television programming. CONNECTUS identified, in particular, a sense among participants that persons with disabilities lag far behind the three other designated groups (women, visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples) with respect to their on-air presence.
19. As a secondary impression, a number of respondents to the study considered that on-air presence tended to be limited to persons with *visible* disabilities, such as individuals using wheelchairs. Respondents suggested that the depiction of *invisible* disabilities, such as those associated with mental illness or learning, are even rarer in programming of any category.
20. Finally, a number of respondents indicated that the presence of persons with disabilities as background performers in dramatic programming was also very limited. Many respondents considered that the greater integration of such individuals into background scenes, whether depicted in wheelchairs or as using white canes or guide dogs, could serve as an effective device to help reduce the marginalization of persons with disabilities in society more generally.
21. The stakeholder forum participants identified the following as the principal reasons for the very limited presence of persons with disabilities in television programming:
 - a lack of roles for persons with disabilities coming out of the production sector;
 - the availability of few on-screen role models, which contributes to a lack of interest in performing at an early age amongst persons with disabilities;
 - a lack of support from the education sector for on-screen professions; and
 - a lack of training opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Portrayal of persons with disabilities in drama programming

22. CONNECTUS reported several recurring themes in the comments of respondents regarding the portrayal of persons with disabilities in drama programming. It found that stereotyping and the perpetuation of myths about persons with disabilities received the most comment. Many respondents were of the view that the greatest problem associated with drama programming is the frequent stereotyping it contained of persons with disabilities. Many respondents identified specific disabilities, often those that were less visible, as receiving the most stereotyped treatment in drama programming. According to several respondents, the less visible a disability is, the more “fear-inducing” the impact of its stereotyped portrayal can be on viewers of drama. One participant noted, for example, that a large amount of violence in drama programming was depicted as being committed by individuals who have mental disabilities, and that this serves to perpetuate the notion that mentally ill individuals are dangerous.
23. In addition to ‘fear-inducing’ portrayals, respondents considered that characters depicted as having disabilities in drama programming were often portrayed in a stereotyped manner that perpetuated myths about life with a disability, featured inaccurate information about disabilities, or overemphasized such qualities as “helplessness” or “misery.”
24. In addition to the comments on the subject of stereotyping, respondents in the CONNECTUS study voiced concern regarding victimization, where characters with disabilities are portrayed as vulnerable and weak, often as the victims of crime or other wrongdoing. Respondents were also concerned by “appropriation of voice” in drama programming. Appropriation of voice refers to instances where able-bodied performers are cast as persons with disabilities, or where writers without disabilities create characters that do have disabilities. According to the CONNECTUS study, strong opinions emerged about appropriation of voice and its implications for the realistic portrayal of persons with disabilities, on employment opportunities for performers with disabilities and professional ethics. Respondents also emphasized that, although the number of persons with disabilities that appear on screen is still small, the number is increasing and their portrayal in drama programming is improving. They also stressed, however, the great importance that they attach to such portrayals being fair, accurate and complete.
25. Many participants at the stakeholder forum were of the view that televised drama programming often portrays persons with disabilities in a manner that gives credence to myths about disabilities and about living with a disability. These myths were said to include the notion that all persons with disabilities are victims or are “suffering”, and are somehow to be pitied, or that disabilities are “conditions” to be “heroically overcome.” While the above considerations generally dominated discussions about portrayal at the stakeholder forum, participants also acknowledged during roundtable discussions that, as is the case with presence, some progress has been made, and that portrayals of persons with disabilities increasingly focus on the person and the skills that the character possesses, rather than on the character’s disability.

Portrayal of persons with disabilities in news and information programming

26. CONNECTUS noted that the comments of respondents touched on both national and local news programming, as well as on news in print and radio. CONNECTUS reported the following principal themes among the perceptions of respondents regarding the portrayal of persons with disabilities in news programming:
- overall lack of coverage of issues specific to persons with disabilities in television news, public affairs and documentary programming;
 - types of coverage that marginalize or stereotype persons with disabilities;
 - use of inappropriate language when referring to persons with disabilities in news stories, and
 - the lack of public affairs and documentary programming dealing with disability issues and persons with disabilities.
27. CONNECTUS noted one participant's observation that, in general, news stories dealing with persons with disabilities tend to focus on "tragedy, victimization, or criminality." Another respondent complained that news coverage is often centred on the "hyper-accomplishments" or heroism of persons with a disability. For many respondents, the crucial issue associated with news and information programming was the insensitivity of its portrayal of persons with disabilities, often revealed through the kind of language used in stories. The central concern expressed was that the use of insensitive language perpetuates the stereotyping of persons with disabilities as being afflicted with conditions that victimized and "medicalized" their status by describing them, for example, as "suffering" from an "affliction," "overcoming" a disability, or as being "confined to a wheelchair."

Barriers to the inclusion of, and to full participation by, persons with disabilities as employees in the television industry

28. According to CONNECTUS, several respondents were concerned that employers often have attitudes and perceptions that effectively serve as barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities or circumscribe their participation as employees. CONNECTUS respondents also cited barriers specific to the broadcasting industry, such as a reticence on the part of the independent production sector to cast or employ persons with disabilities and a lack of communication and outreach throughout the industry as a whole.
29. A common concern was that employers generally lack knowledge and understanding about what workplace accommodation entails, and that many employers overestimate the costs associated with accommodation. Some respondents suggested that there was a "fear factor" present in the workplace regarding persons with disabilities, as well as pervasive myths about their performance. According to these participants, employers frequently perceive an employee with a disability as a burden, rather than an asset, and believe the employee to be unproductive. They expressed the view that this belief among employers is often fed by the equally mistaken notion that a person's physical disability implies an intellectual disability as well.

30. Participants contended that myths such as these contribute to the emergence of a counterproductive workplace culture that leaves employees with disabilities reluctant to self-identify for fear of losing their jobs or hindering their careers, or makes employers reluctant to sanction or fire employees with disabilities for fear of repercussions.

The CAB's findings

31. The CAB reviewed the findings of the CONNECTUS study in detail and, in response, prepared several broad statements of principle to underpin the development of a set of initiatives directed at improving the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming.
32. As a general principle, the CAB stated that Canada's private broadcasters are committed to the development and implementation of initiatives that improve and advance diversity in the industry. The CAB added that all media, and particularly television, can play a strong role in changing public attitudes on social issues, and that greater visibility, more accurate depictions and positive messaging can significantly influence inclusive practices across society.
33. With respect to persons with disabilities, the CAB was of the opinion that the business case for their inclusion is strong, based on the recognition that their on-screen presence and accurate portrayal will reach and increase audiences not only among Canadians with disabilities, but among their families, friends and caregivers. According to the CAB, broadcasters stand to gain a competitive edge by tapping into all of the creative resources available to them, including persons with disabilities; and all employees in the broadcasting industry benefit when efforts are made to accommodate employees with disabilities.
34. In the view of the CAB, building communication and outreach between broadcasters and the disability community is a key starting point for a broadcaster toolkit. The CAB stated further that, in a world marked by technological development and content convergence, it is important to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities across distribution platforms and across media.
35. With these statements of principle as a foundation, the CAB report set out a series of initiatives, tools and recommendations to address the following core issues:
- negative attitudes about and misperceptions of persons with disabilities;
 - the lack of participation (employment) in the industry by persons with disabilities;
 - accommodating persons with disabilities in the television broadcasting industry;
 - presence issues and negative portrayals of persons with disabilities in dramatic programming;
 - presence issues and low or inaccurate coverage of disability issues in news and information programming;

- the lack of industry reference points or standards concerning the depiction and portrayal of persons with disabilities;
- the lack of communication and outreach between the broadcasting industry and the disability community; and
- the lack of internal communication among broadcasters regarding disabilities issues, barriers and initiatives.

Summary of proposed initiatives

36. The CAB developed separate sets of initiatives, including one for itself and individual broadcasters, and one for industry partners. Among the specific initiatives the CAB undertook to implement were the following:
- the creation of a public service announcement (PSA) directed at influencing a positive shift in public attitudes about persons with disabilities;
 - a review of its industry codes to address issues identified in the research about portrayal;
 - the creation of an information package about employment in the broadcasting and production sectors;
 - the development of a training seminar for managers in human resources (HR) and in other departments of companies involved in television broadcasting; and
 - the development of educational material to increase sensitivity and awareness about the harm caused by use of inappropriate language.
37. Other initiatives that the CAB will pursue include: the implementation of measures focused on improving communication and consultation with such industry partners as the independent production industry and the Radio-television News Directors Association (RTNDA); making the Diversity in Broadcasting section of the CAB website more accessible; and increasing efforts to disseminate information to CAB members.
38. The tools and initiatives proposed by the CAB for individual broadcasters include:
- the creation of scholarships, bursaries and/or internships;
 - offers of training and industry orientation to new employees with disabilities;
 - communicating a commitment to positive and accurate depictions with producers through licensing agreements, producer guidelines and/or contracts;
 - the development of local outreach measures;
 - the development of databases of persons with disabilities who are subject matter experts; and
 - the establishment of connections and mechanisms for communication with disability organizations.
39. For its industry partners and such stakeholders such as the RTNDA, cable licensees and the independent production sector, the CAB recommended that they investigate the following:

- the development of accessible diversity sections on their websites;
- measures that the independent production sector might take to identify and expand the talent pool of performers and creators with disabilities;
- measures that the operators of cable community channels might take to develop and implement diversity plans; and
- cooperation among such industry partners as the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists, the Writers Guild of Canada and Union des artistes to create a database of actors, directors and writers with disabilities.

40. The complete list of the CAB's proposed initiatives and tools is set out in the appendix to this notice.

Commission's response to the report

Research

41. The Commission considers the research conducted by CONNECTUS to be both thorough and informative. It provides an essential first step with regard to building knowledge for the broadcasting industry about persons with disabilities and towards developing effective solutions. Moreover, the findings of the CONNECTUS study articulate the key areas of concern for persons with disabilities, and clearly identify the barriers that exist to increasing the on-air presence and participation of persons with disabilities. Those findings will greatly assist the industry and the Commission in setting key priorities on a going-forward basis.
42. The study indicated that, in television programming of any description, the on-air presence of persons with disabilities is extremely limited. This reality is recognized by the CAB in its report, and is widely acknowledged by broadcasters. In fact, the CAB was of the view that the absence of persons with disabilities on screen was so profound, and the need to redress this deficiency so evident, that there would be no merit to compiling a quantitative analysis of the on-air presence of persons with disabilities for its report.
43. With respect to portrayal in drama programming, the Commission notes that stereotyping was the most pressing concern for persons with disabilities. In the view of study respondents, stereotyping of persons with disabilities perpetuates misperceptions and reinforces inaccurate and unfair images of disability communities. Given the role television plays in influencing social attitudes, the Commission considers that the CAB and its member broadcasters are ideally placed to foster greater understanding of persons with disabilities within society and challenge inaccurate, stereotypical perceptions.
44. With respect to portrayal issues in news and information programming, clear concerns were expressed by persons with disabilities about the use of inappropriate language. According to the study, in addition to perpetuating general stereotypes, the language used in news and information programming dealing with disability issues and persons with disabilities, often serves to feed the myth that such persons are "suffering", or are afflicted with conditions that victimize and "medicalize" their status. As noted by the Commission in the Task Force for Cultural Diversity report, accurate and balanced news

and information programming is conducive to a society whose members are better equipped to participate effectively and contribute to its wellbeing. Through the provision of accurate and balanced news programming, television also serves to reflect the circumstances of all Canadians, regardless of gender, race or disability, in fulfilment of the policy objectives of the *Broadcasting Act*.

45. As regards the full participation of persons with disabilities in the broadcasting industry, the study revealed that ignorance was the single greatest obstacle. According to the study, a general lack of knowledge of the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities fed a perception that they are a burden to employers, rather than an asset, and that to accommodate their needs would be costly and time consuming. Respondents indicated that such unfounded beliefs are reinforced at all corporate levels by a variety of myths and stereotypes.
46. In the Commission's view, the study has confirmed that substantial barriers to the increased presence, participation and improved portrayal of persons with disabilities in the industry remain in place. More specifically, the Commission considers that the extremely limited employment of persons with disabilities by the industry, both on-air and behind the camera, and the industry's general lack of knowledge of the needs of persons with disabilities for access and accommodation as employees, are areas that require particular attention. In addition to the various initiatives outlined by the CAB in its report, which are analyzed below, the Commission expects individual broadcasters, in their annual cultural diversity reports, to describe the initiatives they have pursued to increase knowledge, at all corporate levels, of the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities, to implement the measures necessary to improve the portrayal of persons with disabilities on screen, and increase their participation within the industry. The Commission will place particular importance on these initiatives and measures in assessing a licensee's annual cultural diversity report. The Commission also encourages licensees, in developing these initiatives and measures, to give particular attention to community outreach initiatives involving persons with disabilities and disability organizations.

Initiatives, tools and recommendations

47. The Commission is satisfied that the CAB, by the initiatives it has identified for itself and its commitment to their implementation, has demonstrated considerable leadership. The initiatives are tangible and concrete, and address many of the concerns identified in the research. Taken together, the initiatives have the potential to contribute significantly to the attainment of several objectives of the *Broadcasting Act* by:
 - raising awareness among broadcasters and the public;
 - helping influence public perceptions;
 - helping to ensure that persons with disabilities are accurately depicted in programming;
 - providing useful information to the industry and the disability community;

- increasing dialogue between broadcasters and the disability community; and
- creating an environment that invites participation by persons with disabilities in broadcasting.

48. Moreover, in the view of the Commission, the creation of a PSA, the review of industry codes, and the development of educational material concerning the use of inappropriate language, are particularly important in responding to the predominant concerns identified by the CONNECTUS study, namely negative social attitudes, misperceptions and misinformation among the broadcasting sector and the public about persons with disabilities and life with a disability. These are tangible, baseline initiatives with a high potential for raising awareness of the fundamental concerns of persons with disabilities.
49. The development of educational material to increase sensitivity and awareness about the harm caused by use of inappropriate language is a particularly important initiative. The language used in a broadcast can have a significant influence on how people react to depictions of themselves in programming, as well as on how others react to those depictions. The Commission notes that guidelines exist with respect to the language and terminology that is appropriate and acceptable for use in reference to disability issues and persons with disabilities, and welcomes the CAB's initiative to disseminate this essential information to its members.
50. The Commission also supports the CAB's proposed initiatives designed to disseminate information on employment and accommodation in the workplace, and to improve communication and consultation with its industry partners. In the Commission's view, initiatives such as these will assist greatly in removing barriers to employment and other forms of participation in the industry by persons with disabilities.
51. The CAB has noted that the effectiveness of each of its proposed initiatives will depend largely on the level of participation by individual broadcasters in their implementation. Similarly, the success of training seminars for HR and other managers will depend on the level of participation by individual broadcasters. In this regard, the Commission considers it important that the CAB adhere to its commitment to report on its progress in implementing such initiatives.
52. The Commission is satisfied that the research and the proposed tools and initiatives outlined in the report will help broadcasters understand the issues and concerns of persons with disabilities regarding the barriers that they face, and to implement effective mechanisms to address them. At the same time, the Commission notes that the initiatives proposed by the CAB for implementation by individual broadcasters were put forward on the understanding that they would be implemented "as appropriate," and would be tailored to accommodate the "business and operational needs" of individual broadcasters.
53. In the Commission's view, given the extremely limited on-screen presence of persons with disabilities and the critical concerns regarding portrayal, broadcasting licensees should give priority to developing and implementing initiatives that will help remedy these concerns. Specifically, as noted above, the Commission expects individual

broadcasters, in their annual corporate cultural diversity reports, to include initiatives designed to reach out to persons with disabilities and increase knowledge of the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities at all corporate levels, and to implement measures to increase the presence and participation of persons with disabilities, both on-air and behind the camera. The Commission notes that the information contained in the CAB report provides a framework that will assist the Commission in assessing the initiatives set out in individual broadcasters' future annual reports and their progress towards their implementation. The Commission reminds licensees that their initiatives in this regard are in addition to the responsibilities and priorities they have regarding the presence and portrayal of visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples identified in Public Notice 2005-24.

54. The Commission agrees that other sectors of the industry, including independent producers, writers and directors, also play a critical role in improving the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming. As such, the Commission strongly encourages these industry partners of the CAB to explore the creation of relevant initiatives and to work with the CAB in this area.
55. With respect to the portrayal concerns identified in the study, the CAB proposes to address these concerns, in large part, through revisions to its existing industry codes. The Commission responds further to this proposed strategy below.

CAB review of industry codes

56. The CAB submitted that the interests of private broadcasters, the public and the Commission would be best served by the development of an expanded portrayal code that would replace the current CAB Sex-Role Portrayal Code for Radio and Television Programming (SRPC). According to the CAB, most of the proscriptive provisions contained in the SRPC are as applicable to the portrayal concerns identified in the Task Force for Cultural Diversity report and the Persons with Disabilities report, as they are to gender. The CAB therefore submitted that such provisions can, and should, be revised to include industry standards concerning the depiction and portrayal of ethnocultural and Aboriginal groups and persons with disabilities. The CAB intends to submit the new portrayal code to the Commission for approval in June 2006, following a process of consultation and feedback.
57. The CAB's review of its industry codes is an integral part of the CAB's strategy to address the concerns respecting the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities. As the Commission stated in Public Notice 2005-24, industry codes play an essential role in self-regulation. They provide guidelines to programmers and the public about acceptable content. Codes are also used by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council when adjudicating complaints about such matters as stereotyping and abusive or discriminatory content. It is therefore important that codes be in tune with, and be effective in responding to, concerns regarding portrayal in programming.

58. The Commission intends to review in detail the CAB's revised portrayal code once it has been filed. The Commission considers that the CAB's revised SRPC will be a crucial component of the industry's overall approach to persons with disabilities. As such, in assessing the revised code, the Commission will pay particular attention to ensuring that any proposed measures adequately encompass the portrayal concerns identified in this notice. Further, the Commission expects the CAB to demonstrate that it has satisfied the conditions for the development of industry standards as set out in *Guidelines for Developing Industry-Administered Standards*, Public Notice CRTC 1988-13, 29 January 1988.
59. The Commission also notes the CAB's intention to consult with the RTNDA and to develop educational material on appropriate language. The CAB has also recommended that the RTNDA revise its own code of ethics to improve the portrayal of persons with disabilities and the coverage of disability issues in news and information programming. The Commission emphasizes the value it places on such a partnership, and considers that the two revised codes (the proposed CAB SRPC and RTNDA code of ethics), taken together, will provide a good start in addressing many of the issues affecting the portrayal of persons with disabilities in television programming.

Future progress

60. As noted above, the Commission expects progress to be made by both the CAB and broadcasters in addressing the key gaps identified in the CONNECTUS research report. More specifically, the Commission expects to see progress in the areas of:
- increasing knowledge of the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities at all corporate levels;
 - implementing measures to increase the presence and participation of persons with disabilities, both on-air and behind the camera in terms of access and accommodation; and
 - community outreach initiatives involving persons with disabilities and disability organizations.
61. The Commission will wish to see evidence of such progress, both in the reports it receives from the CAB regarding implementation of industry initiatives, and in the broadcasters' annual cultural diversity reports. The Commission will examine these reports for evidence of progress in addressing each of the key gaps mentioned above, and will then assess if, and to what extent, further intervention is required.

Secretary General

This document is available in alternative format upon request, and may also be examined in PDF format or in HTML at the following Internet site: <http://www.crtc.gc.ca>

Appendix to Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2006-77

CAB initiatives, tools and recommendations: Presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television

	Issue	Objective	Recommendation	Tools	Timing and Implementation
A	Negative attitudes and misperceptions of persons with disabilities	Influence the public and our audiences about persons with disabilities to encourage attitudinal shift	1) Increase presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television in all initiatives noted 2) Create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that may be broadcast on CAB member stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSA for use by all broadcasters for airing at any time. • CAB Industry Content Codes 	CAB to coordinate and undertake launch of PSA for broadcast in the Fall 2006.
B	Lack of participation (employment) in the industry by persons with disabilities	Increase access to information about employment opportunities in broadcasting to disability community	Develop an information package about employment in the broadcasting and production sectors for wide distribution to broadcasters, educators and disability community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible brochure • <i>Diversity in Broadcasting</i> section of CAB website • Job fairs/recruiting • Scholarships and internships (station level) • Mentoring and job shadowing for new employees with disabilities (station level) 	Through its committees, CAB to begin work immediately for completion in 2006
C	Accommodating persons with disabilities in television broadcasting industry	Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the industry by better accommodating their needs.	With the input of the disability community, develop training seminar for managers in television broadcasting industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training seminar 	CAB to investigate available training for adaptation to television settings (e.g. Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work) for implementation in 2006
D	Presence issues and negative portrayals of persons with disabilities in dramatic programming	Increase presence; improve depictions by ensuring accurate characterizations and storylines	Broadcasters to use their existing licensing agreements, guidelines and/or contracts with producers to enforce positive depiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements with producers • CAB Industry Content Codes • Distribute revised CAB Codes to industry partners 	CAB Board to initiate process in 2005 by issuing communique to independent production community

E	Presence issues and low/inaccurate coverage of disability issues in news and information programming	Improve on-air presence of persons with disabilities and improve coverage of disability issues in television news & information programming	Consult with RTNDA and disability community on development of local outreach measures and other initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local outreach initiatives (e.g. consult with disability groups) • Develop database of subject matter experts (station level) 	Through its Committees, CAB to initiate discussion with RTNDA in 2005; initiatives advanced through broadcaster diversity plans
F	Use of inappropriate language respecting persons with disabilities in news and information programming	Educate the broadcasting sector about inappropriate and insensitive language on an on-going basis	Seeking the input of the disability community, CAB to work with RTNDA to develop educational material on inappropriate language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information brochure circulated to CAB and RTNDA members, posted on-line in accessible format 	CAB to undertake with RTNDA immediately for completion in 2006
G	Lack of industry reference points or standards concerning the portrayal of persons with disabilities	Create a set of guidelines and standards for broadcaster use	Integrate standards and guidelines into review of Industry Content Codes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of CAB Industry Content Codes 	Review process is underway, proactively including persons with disabilities; completion in Spring 2006
H	Lack of communication and outreach between broadcasting industry and disability community	Increase on-going meaningful dialogue between the two sectors	On an individual broadcaster basis, establish connections with local disability organizations and implement a mechanism for regular communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate station outreach initiatives into corporate diversity planning • Develop <i>Diversity in Broadcasting</i> section of CAB website as main source of information on Persons with Disabilities providing links to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disability groups by region ○ Broadcasters and industry partners initiatives and activities • Ensure <i>Diversity in Broadcasting</i> content is accessible 	On-going, with inclusion of initiatives in corporate diversity plans

I	Lack of internal communication among broadcasters regarding disability issues, barriers and initiatives	Improve communication about disability issues and barriers within the broadcasting industry	Create materials and mechanisms for better communicating information about disability issues, barriers and initiatives to CAB membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repurpose CAB Cultural Diversity Committee to the CAB Diversity Committee • Circulate information to CAB membership through Updates, President's Reports, etc. • Maximize awareness of issue through coverage by mainstream and trade publications • On-line report and research document accessible on-line • Use CAB Convention to promote diversity issues • Ensure Persons with Disabilities remains on the agenda of CAB Committees' meetings. 	Begins with release of CAB Report in September 2005; CAB initiative currently underway to improve accessibility of website
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Recommendations for Industry Partners

Issue	Objective	Recommendation	Tools	Timing and Implementation
Presence issues and negative portrayals in the independent production sector	Improve the presence of performers and creators with disabilities on-screen/behind the scenes and more accurately depict characters with disabilities	Recommend that the production sector (i) take steps to increase/identify the talent pool of performers and creators with disabilities and (ii) consult with disability groups and experts about characterization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producer, Writer, Director etc. Associations should develop resource similar to ACTRA Toronto's Mainstream Now! publication • Develop accessible diversity sections within production industry websites 	Recommend implementation in 2006
Lack of Access and Training Opportunities	Provide training opportunities and skills development in local communities	Cable licensees operating community channels should identify diversity strategies aimed at encouraging better participation of persons with disabilities in community programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement diversity plans 	Recommend implementation in 2006
Use of inappropriate or insensitive language regarding persons with disabilities in news and information programming and the low or inaccurate coverage of disability issues in news and information programming	Improve portrayal/depiction of persons with disabilities and coverage of disability issues by television news	RTNDA to consult with disability community on how to improve portrayal of persons with disabilities and coverage of disability issues in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review RTNDA Code of Ethics in context of research findings 	Recommend review as soon as possible and in conjunction with CAB review of Industry Content Codes