



Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2026-90

PDF version

Reference: Part 1 application posted on 6 March 2025

Gatineau, 15 May 2026

Vues & Voix
Across Canada

Public record: 2025-0099-1

Canal M – Application to increase the mandatory per subscriber monthly wholesale rate

Summary

Canal M is a French-language discretionary service that offers visually impaired Canadians audio programming on a variety of topics, including news and current affairs programs. The service has benefited from a mandatory distribution order issued under paragraph 9.1(1)(h) of the *Broadcasting Act* since 2009.¹

In 2025, Vues & Voix filed an application to increase the mandatory per subscriber monthly wholesale rate for Canal M from \$0.04 to \$0.07 (i.e., an increase of \$0.03 over the current rate).

In Broadcasting Decision 2025-312, the Commission decided to defer its consideration of the application while it examines structural issues that affect the broadcasting industry as a whole. The Commission noted, however, that it could still consider the application on a shorter timeline, as it deemed appropriate.

The Commission recognizes the important role Canal M plays for the accessibility community and for people with disabilities by allowing them to have access to large amount of content and information that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. In the Commission's view, the service fills an exceptional need by promoting increased participation in the social and civic life of these persons. This is the reason why mandatory distribution was granted to the service. This is also why the Commission has examined the application on a shorter timeline than that envisaged in Broadcasting Decision 2025-312.

¹ See Broadcasting Order 2009-542.

However, after examining the present application on the basis of the public record, the Commission finds that it does not have sufficient evidence to justify the rate increase requested by Vue & Voix. Although the Commission denies the application for now due to a lack of detailed justification, the Commission is willing to examine a more complete application if Vues & Voix wishes to do so.

The Commission notes, however, that it is considering more general regulatory and systemic issues regarding the broadcasting system. In ongoing proceedings, the Commission is examining in particular the support granted to services of exceptional importance, such as those benefiting from a mandatory distribution order, like Canal M. This larger policy framework will contribute in particular to ensuring the sustainability and growth of the Canadian broadcasting system. Once the new framework is established, the targeted services will be able to familiarize themselves with it and file new applications if necessary.

Background

1. Vues & Voix is a not-for-profit corporation controlled by its board of directors.
2. Canal M is a French-language discretionary service offering visually impaired Canadians audio programming on a variety of subjects, including news and current affairs programs.
3. Canal M has benefited from a mandatory distribution order issued under paragraph 9.1(1)(h) of the *Broadcasting Act* (the Act) since 2009.² This order imposes the distribution of Canal M on an audio channel to all subscribers to the digital basic service in French-language markets, with a wholesale rate of \$0.04 per subscriber.
4. In Broadcasting Decision 2023-245, the Commission administratively renewed the broadcasting licences and mandatory distribution orders for a certain number of discretionary services and television networks, including Canal M, until 31 August 2026.
5. In 2025, Vues & Voix filed an application to increase Canal M's mandatory per subscriber monthly wholesale rate. The application is described in greater detail below.
6. In Broadcasting Decision 2025-312, the Commission deferred its consideration of Vues & Voix's application, stating that key policy decisions affecting the broadcasting system as a whole would arise from ongoing proceedings. The Commission found it would be more appropriate to consider Vues & Voix's application in light of those decisions, but indicated that it could do this on a shorter timeline, as it deemed appropriate.

² See Broadcasting Order 2009-542.

Application

7. The application from Vues & Voix aims to increase Canal M's mandatory per subscriber monthly wholesale rate from \$0.04 to \$0.07 (i.e., an increase of \$0.03 over the current rate).
8. Vues & Voix stated that without a rate increase, Canal M will no longer be able to maintain its current level of production and service. It also indicated that its current infrastructure is outdated and limits adaptation to new consumer habits (e.g., on mobile devices and social media). Vues & Voix also noted the difficult economic context it faces. In its view, the rising cost of living and falling revenues from fees are coinciding with an increase in the needs of vulnerable populations, which justifies the proposed increase.

Interventions

9. The Commission received five interventions in regard to this application. Vues & Voix did not reply to the interventions.
10. Bell Canada, Rogers Communications Canada Inc. (Rogers), Quebecor Media Inc. (Quebecor), Bragg Communications Inc., carrying on business as Eastlink (Eastlink), and Cogeco inc. (Cogeco) argued that broadcasting distribution undertakings (BDUs), already weakened by the loss of subscribers and revenues, are not in a position to absorb further rate increases. In their view, BDUs cannot take on an additional financial burden. They proposed that online companies should also contribute to the funding of 9.1(1)(h) services.
11. Cogeco also objected to the present application, noting that the Commission renewed the licences for several services until 2026³ to allow for adapting the regulatory framework to the new Act. In its view, granting a rate increase at this time would run counter to this planned approach, especially since Canal M, like all 9.1(1)(h) services, is not the only service experiencing financial difficulties.
12. Rogers and Quebecor also asserted that Vues & Voix's application does not meet the criteria established by the Commission, notably those specified in Broadcasting Decision 2024-314, since no evidence was provided on the applicant's inability to fulfill its obligations without a rate increase, or on the concrete benefits such an increase would bring to the Canadian broadcasting system.
13. Further, Rogers, Quebecor, and Cogeco noted that Vues & Voix's application does not present convincing financial evidence. Eastlink argued that Vues & Voix did not demonstrate that it would be unable to fulfill its commitments in the absence of an immediate rate increase.

³ See Broadcasting Decision 2023-245.

14. Cogeco noted that Vues & Voix claims to have developed its online presence to compensate for the loss of linear television subscribers. In the intervener's view, this demonstrates that the applicant is able to pursue its mission, and do so without relying exclusively on funding derived from its 9.1(1)(h) service status.

Legal and policy frameworks

Accessibility and diversity

15. The Act sets out, among other things, the objectives for the Canadian broadcasting system in regard to providing accessible programming for persons with disabilities and increasing diversity within the system.⁴ The mandatory distribution of Canal M is one of many ways the Commission supports the achievement of those objectives.
16. Ever since Canal M obtained a mandatory distribution order in 2009, significant advances in accessibility within the Canadian broadcasting system have laid the groundwork for the modernization and expansion of accessible programming. Over the past decade, the Commission has implemented and strengthened regulations requiring broadcasters to provide closed captioning and described video. These measures were designed to improve access to content for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or partially sighted.⁵ Over the years, the Commission has broadened the scope of these policies and incorporated various accessibility requirements into the conditions of service applicable to licensed services, thereby reinforcing broadcasters' obligations in regard to accessibility measures.
17. Since the *Accessible Canada Act* came into force in 2019, the Commission must also take into account the purpose and principles of this act, which emphasizes the importance of prevention through the identification and removal of barriers to accessibility.
18. Finally, to continue to improve the accessibility of programming in line with the modernized Act, the Commission has launched a series of consultations⁶ to examine how the broadcasting system

⁴ See subparagraph 3(1)(d)(iii) and paragraphs 3(1)(p) and (p.1) of the Act.

⁵ See Broadcasting and Telecom Regulatory Policy 2009-430 relating to accessibility of telecommunications and broadcasting services, Broadcasting Regulatory Policies 2011-741 and 2011-741-1 relating to quality standards for French-language closed captioning, and Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2019-308 relating to quality standards for English-language closed captioning.

⁶ For example, the Commission launched two public consultations: one on developing the policy for described video and audio description (which led to Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2025-344), and another on the closed captioning of programming by online streaming services (see Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2024-137, which will lead to the publication of a regulatory policy in the near future). With these consultations, the Commission aims to enhance the accessibility of programming on traditional and online platforms for Canadians with hearing or visual disabilities. The decisions resulting from these consultations will be consistent with the goals of the *Accessible Canada Act* to make Canada without barriers for persons with disabilities by 2040.

can better reflect the experiences of all Canadians and promote access to diverse voices and viewpoints.

19. In particular, the Commission recently established measures⁷ to ensure that barriers to accessing programs are identified, removed, and prevented for persons who are blind or partially sighted. As such, these persons can access accessible programs, whether they do so online or through traditional television services.

Wholesale rates for 9.1(1)(h) services

20. Under paragraph 9.1(1)(h) of the Act, the Commission has the authority to impose conditions on distribution undertakings requiring them to carry programming services and to set the terms and conditions for distribution.
21. The Commission has used this important regulatory tool to require the distribution of services that contribute in an exceptional manner to the objectives of the Act. Mandatory distribution ensures that more diverse programming is produced and made available to Canadians, and helps to ensure that smaller and diverse audiences benefit from having access to content that is relevant to, and reflective of them, but may not be available to them. For a service to be granted mandatory distribution, an applicant must demonstrate that the service is of exceptional importance to the achievement of the objectives of the Act, by meeting the criteria set out in Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2010-629.
22. The Commission sets the wholesale rate for 9.1(1)(h) services when it grants them mandatory distribution. The Commission generally assesses requests to increase rates at licence renewal, as this allows it to review at the same time the service's contributions and its requirements. However, the Commission can review rates outside of licence renewal when circumstances warrant.
23. The Commission considers whether the rate increase is necessary for the service to meet its programming commitments and remain of exceptional importance to the Canadian broadcasting system. Additionally, the Commission evaluates whether the service contributes appropriately to the fulfillment of the policy objectives of the Act.
24. The Commission has historically considered declining BDU subscription levels as a factor justifying the approval of a rate increase.⁸ However, this factor is always weighted against the ability of a 9.1(1)(h) service to continue contributing in an exceptional manner to the broadcasting system. Beyond simply exposing the challenges faced by traditional players, an applicant requesting a rate increase outside of the licence renewal process should be able to

⁷ These measures are set out in Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2025-344.

⁸ See Broadcasting Decisions 2018-340, 2018-329, and 2018-307.

demonstrate its inability to meet its requirements without the rate increase. If not, the applicant should clearly establish that the requested rate increase would add sufficient value to the broadcasting system to justify approval of the increase.

Issues

25. In light of the above and of the information on the public record, the Commission considers that it must address the following issues:

- whether Vues & Voix has demonstrated a financial need for the requested rate increase; and
- whether Vues & Voix could continue to make a significant contribution to the broadcasting system in the absence of an immediate rate increase.

Has Vues & Voix demonstrated a financial need for the requested rate increase?

26. Vues & Voix indicated that it is in a critical financial situation. It argued that the absence of a rate increase could prevent it from maintaining the level of programming currently offered on Canal M and lead to the departure of key personnel.
27. To support its application, Vues & Voix submitted a letter summarizing its situation, its priorities, and the steps it has taken to address its difficulties.
28. The Commission recognizes that Vues & Voix is a small company, supported mainly by volunteers. The Commission considers that this organizational context deserves to be taken into account in assessing the present application. That said, the Commission notes that each applicant is responsible for submitting a complete and sufficiently substantiated file in support of its application. In addition, this application is for a service of exceptional importance. It must therefore be supported by sufficient information, particularly since 9.1(1)(h) services benefit from guaranteed funding, which BDUs are required to pay.
29. To adequately assess the merits of an application, the Commission must be able to rely on clear and detailed evidence. This involves, among other things, the presentation of precise justifications and full explanations of the technical or economic reasons behind the application, with all relevant data (including studies, analyses, and other supporting documents).
30. In this case, although Vues & Voix described the urgency of the situation and the issues relating to retaining its specialized staff, the Commission notes that no detailed financial data was submitted. The Commission notes that while it is sensitive to the challenges encountered by the applicant, its ability to assess the effectiveness and viability of measures implemented or planned is limited by the lack of budgetary figures, financial projections, or a breakdown of expenditures.

31. The Commission also notes that Vues & Voix did not respond to the comments made by five BDUs. A response to these comments could have offered an opportunity to clarify certain points, address the issues raised and better contextualize the application.
32. In light of the above, the Commission finds that the applicant has not provided sufficient justification to demonstrate that approval of its application is required to ensure the continuation of its activities.

Could Vues & Voix continue to make a significant contribution to the broadcasting system in the absence of an immediate rate increase?

33. Subsection 3(1) of the Act sets out the Canadian broadcasting policy objectives. In particular, it states that the Canadian broadcasting system should provide programming that is accessible to persons with disabilities and that reflects their circumstances and aspirations.
34. In Broadcasting Decision 2018-307, the Commission recognized that Canal M allowed persons with disabilities to have access to a large amount of content and information that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. It found that the service met an exceptional need by promoting greater participation in social and civic life for these persons.
35. Since that time, consumer habits have changed in a marked way. The use of digital platforms, podcasts, social media and mobile devices is now a dominant reality.
36. In its application, Vues & Voix indicated that Canal M's current infrastructure is outdated, limiting its ability to adapt to its audience's new consumption habits.
37. The Commission recognizes the significant efforts made by Vues & Voix to adapt to new consumer habits, notably by diversifying its broadcasting platforms, extending the reach of its programming on social media, and establishing partnerships. That said, the Commission notes that the present application concerns a linear broadcasting service. However, Vues & Voix did not provide a detailed plan, broken-down financial data, or a formal commitment concretely demonstrating the need for an immediate rate increase in order for its linear service to continue making a significant contribution to the Canadian broadcasting system. Specifically, the applicant has not demonstrated how the requested additional funds would contribute to maintaining or enhancing Canal M's programming in a way that would further the policy objectives of the Act.
38. In Broadcasting Decision 2024-314, the Commission indicated that an applicant requesting a rate increase outside of the licence renewal process should be able to demonstrate its inability to meet its requirements without the rate increase. If not, the applicant should clearly establish that the

requested rate increase would add sufficient value to the broadcasting system to justify approval of the increase.⁹

39. The Commission considers that in the absence of evidence justifying approval of the requested rate increase, it is not possible to determine whether the increase would enhance Canal M's exceptional contribution to the representation of diversity, to inclusion, and to accessibility in the Canadian broadcasting system. As explained above, it is also not possible to assess the degree to which a denial of the present application would compromise Vues & Voix's ability to fulfill its obligations related to its linear service.
40. In light of the above, the Commission finds that Vues & Voix has not demonstrated that Canal M would be unable to continue making exceptional contributions to the broadcasting system without an immediate rate increase.
41. The Commission notes that the issues raised by the BDUs relate to more general systemic regulatory issues. Such issues are currently being examined in Commission proceedings addressing the establishment of a sustainable broadcasting system and support for the creation and distribution of Canadian programming in the audio-visual sector.¹⁰ Decisions on this matter will be issued in the near future.

Conclusion

42. The Commission recognizes the important role Canal M plays in improving accessibility in Canada for people with disabilities.
43. The Commission is also sensitive to the reality faced by small organizations with limited financial resources, and supports them wherever possible in order to promote a diversity of voices within the Canadian broadcasting system. That said, the Commission bases its examination on the file submitted by the applicant, as well as on the public record.
44. In this case, the Commission considers that Vues & Voix did not provide sufficient justification to demonstrate that an immediate rate increase is required to ensure the continuation of its activities.
45. In light of all of the above, the Commission denies Vues & Voix's application to increase the mandatory per subscriber monthly wholesale rate for the French-language discretionary service Canal M. That said, it still remains possible for Vues & Voix to file a new application, which the Commission will be able to examine in the future.

⁹ See paragraph 28 of Broadcasting Decision 2024-314.

¹⁰ See Broadcasting Notices of Consultation 2025-2 and 2024-288.

46. The Commission notes, however, that it is considering more general regulatory and systemic issues regarding the broadcasting system. In ongoing proceedings, the Commission is examining in particular the support granted to services of exceptional importance, such as those benefiting from a mandatory distribution order, like Canal M. This larger policy framework will contribute in particular to ensuring the sustainability and growth of the Canadian broadcasting system. Once the new framework is established, the targeted services will be able to familiarize themselves with it and file new applications if necessary.
47. In addition, in order to continue supporting the fulfillment of the policy objectives set out in the *Broadcasting Act*, the Commission is currently examining – through a series of public consultations focused on accessibility – how the broadcasting system can better accommodate the diverse experiences of Canadians. These consultations will be consistent with the goal of the *Accessible Canada Act* to make Canada without barriers for persons with disabilities by 2040.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Regulatory Policy for Described Video and Audio Description*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2025-344, 17 December 2025
- *CPAC, TV5/UNIS TV, and Canal M – Applications to increase the mandatory per subscriber monthly wholesale rates – Deferral of consideration of the applications*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2025-312, 21 November 2025
- *The Path Forward – Working towards a sustainable Canadian broadcasting system*, Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2025-2, 9 January 2025
- *AMI-tv and AMI-télé – Application to increase the monthly per subscriber wholesale rates*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2024-314, 3 December 2024
- *The Path Forward – Defining “Canadian program” and supporting the creation and distribution of Canadian programming in the audio-visual sector*, Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-288, 15 November 2024
- *Call for comments – Development of a regulatory policy for closed captioning provided by online streaming undertakings*, Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-137, 25 June 2024
- *Various television programming services and networks, and broadcasting distribution undertakings – Administrative renewals*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2023-245, 8 August 2023
- *English-language closed captioning mandatory quality standards relating to the accuracy*

rate for live television programming, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2019-308, 30 August 2019

- *APTN – Licence renewal and renewal of mandatory distribution order*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2018-340, 31 August 2018
- *Cable Public Affairs Channel – Licence renewal and renewal of mandatory distribution order*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2018-329, 29 August 2018
- *Canal M – Licence renewal and renewal of mandatory distribution order*, Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2018-307, 23 August 2018
- *Quality standards for French-language closed captioning*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2011-741, 1 December 2011; as amended by *Quality standards for French-language closed captioning – Enforcement, monitoring and the future mandate of the French-language Closed Captioning Working Group*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2011-741-1, 21 February 2012
- *Criteria for assessing applications for mandatory distribution on the digital basic service*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2010-629, 27 August 2010
- *Mandatory distribution order and licence amendment for La Magnétothèque*, Broadcasting Order CRTC 2009-542, 31 August 2009
- *Accessibility of telecommunications and broadcasting services*, Broadcasting and Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2009-430, 21 July 2009