



Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2026-98

PDF version

References: 2024-137, 2024-137-1, and 2024-137-2

Gatineau, 25 May 2026

Public record: 1011-NOC2024-0137

Regulatory policy for closed captioning provided by online streaming undertakings

Summary

The *Online Streaming Act* made significant changes to the *Broadcasting Act* (the Act) that require the Commission to modernize the Canadian broadcasting framework and help ensure that programs are accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities, including through closed captioning services for persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing (DDBHH).

Closed captioning allows persons who are DDBHH to have access to different parts of the auditory content of programming. Closed captioning displays a program's dialogue on screen; it conveys background noises, music, and other sounds; and it identifies speakers and their manner of speaking, to the fullest extent possible.

As part of its broader regulatory plan to implement the modernized Act, the Commission launched a public consultation to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to access to programming. It sought comments on the establishment of a regulatory policy regarding closed captioning of programs provided by online streaming services operating in Canada. The Commission received a wide range of views in response, including from online streaming services, on-demand services, traditional broadcasters, associations representing broadcasters, accessibility groups, and individuals.

Based on the record, the Commission has determined that online streaming services must provide closed captioning for all new original programs, live and pre-recorded, within one year. These services must also provide closed captioning for all English- and French-language programs that have previously been broadcast on traditional television with captions. Furthermore, online streaming services must provide closed captioning for 80% of their program catalogues within four years and 100% within five years. This time will help ensure that closed captioning is accurate and of high quality.

The Commission also expects online streaming services to ensure that users can easily activate closed captioning and customize caption features.

The Commission will impose these requirements by way of orders issued pursuant to section 9.1 of the Act. The text of the proposed orders is set out in Appendix 2 to this regulatory policy. Interested persons may file comments on the proposed orders by no later than **25 June 2026** and may submit a reply to any comments received by no later than **6 July 2026**.

Key information from this regulatory policy is available in American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ).

Introduction

1. On 27 April 2023, the *Online Streaming Act* came into effect.¹ This legislation includes, among other things, amendments to the *Broadcasting Act* (the Act) that reinforce the importance of providing programs that are accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities, including on online streaming services. Pursuant to paragraph 3(1)(p.1) of the Act, programming that is accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities should be provided within the Canadian broadcasting system, including, without limitation, closed captioning services available to assist persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing (DDBHH).
2. Closed captioning enables persons who are DDBHH to have access to audio-visual programs by displaying in text what is being said on screen. Closed captions can also provide additional contextual information for the viewer by describing who is speaking, what music is playing, and other audible cues.²
3. For persons who are DDBHH, closed captioning is a key means of making audio-visual programs accessible. The Commission's existing rules for closed captioning of traditional television programming reflect this importance. These same sources of information and entertainment are increasingly available online through a variety of platforms.
4. In Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2024-137 (the Notice), the Commission sought comments on the development of a regulatory policy for closed captioning provided by online streaming undertakings operating in Canada that provide audio-visual programs whose original language is English or French.³ The objective of the proceeding was to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to access to online programming for persons who are DDBHH.

¹ *An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts*, S.C. 2023, c.8.

² Subtitling, which translates the dialogue of programs into other languages, is not the same as closed captioning, which is an accessibility measure.

³ This regulatory policy applies only to programs in which the original language is either English or French (i.e., programs with English audio must provide closed captioning in English only); it does not apply to translations of these programs into another language, such as an English program with French subtitles or vice versa, or programs in a third-language; it also does not apply to dubbed programs in which the audio is converted into English or French by lip synchronization or voice-over translation.

5. Closed captioning can also help others, including persons with auditory processing disabilities, process the auditory content of the program more quickly, or individuals who are learning English or French to improve comprehension and fluency.

Record of the proceeding

6. The Commission made the decisions set out in the present regulatory policy based on the record of this proceeding,⁴ which includes comments from a wide range of interveners. The record also includes online streaming undertakings' responses to requests for information (RFIs) sent in December 2023 and November 2024.
7. The following steps were taken to make this proceeding accessible for persons with disabilities, including those who are DDBHH:
 - the Notice was translated into American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ);
 - comments from interveners were accepted in ASL and LSQ;
 - extended timeframes for the intervention and reply periods were provided from the outset;
 - requests by accessibility groups for extensions to these timelines were granted on two occasions; and
 - the key elements of this regulatory policy were made available in ASL and LSQ.
8. The public record for this proceeding can be found on the Commission's [public proceedings](#) webpage.

Interventions

9. The Commission received 64 interventions and 16 replies in response to the Notice from online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, traditional broadcasters, associations representing broadcasters, accessibility groups, and individuals. The issues raised in the interventions are addressed below in the relevant sections of this regulatory policy.

Legal framework

10. The Commission is establishing this regulatory policy using its authority under the Act⁵ and in accordance with the *Order Issuing Directions to the CRTC (Sustainable and Equitable*

⁴ Certain information was filed in confidence and, therefore, is not available on the public record.

⁵ S.C. 1991, c.11.

Broadcasting Regulatory Framework)⁶ (the Policy Direction). Although the Commission is exercising its authority under the Act, the complementary objective and principles of the *Accessible Canada Act* inform the Commission's work.

11. For a more detailed explanation of the legal framework, see Appendix 1 to this regulatory policy.

Issues

12. After examining the record for this proceeding, the Commission considers that it must address the following issues:

- application of the regulatory policy to online streaming undertakings;
- types of programs to be closed captioned:
 - (i) original, pre-recorded programs,
 - (ii) programs originally broadcast on linear television with closed captioning,
 - (iii) live programs,
 - (iv) program catalogues,
 - (v) programs sourced from exempt on-demand services,
 - (vi) advertisements, promotional programs, and short-form programs;
- quality standards – closed captioning:
 - (i) original, pre-recorded programs,
 - (ii) original, live programs,
 - (iii) third-party programs;
- user experience:
 - (i) enhancing usability – closed captioning,
 - (ii) complaints process,
 - (iii) consultations with DDBHH communities,

⁶ SOR/2023-239, 9 November 2023.

- (iv) assessing the need for a working group; and
- implementation and reporting:
 - (i) implementation timeframes and reports, and
 - (ii) annual reports.

Application of the regulatory policy to online streaming undertakings

13. The Commission sought comments on which online streaming undertakings should be subject to requirements on closed captioning.
14. Parties suggested several ways in which the Commission could decide to whom this regulatory policy should apply. These suggestions included exempting online streaming undertakings from the policy, applying the policy to all online streaming undertakings, and applying the regulatory policy according to specific criteria, such as:
 - the size of the undertaking, measured according to subscriber and/or viewer numbers;
 - the online registration requirements set out in the *Online Undertakings Registration Regulations*,⁷ (the Registration Regulations) and Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329 and Broadcasting Order 2023-330;
 - annual Canadian broadcasting revenues;
 - the types of programs offered by the service: for example, original, third-party, pre-recorded, or live programs; or
 - whether the undertaking is based in Canada or another country.
15. The Commission considers that using the Registration Regulations criteria will ensure that the vast majority of the most popular and widely used online streaming undertakings operating in Canada are captured by this regulatory policy and, as a result, will maximize the benefit of these important accessibility measures for as many Canadians as possible.
16. Traditional broadcasters' online platforms⁸ that are registered under the Registration Regulations are considered online streaming undertakings for the purposes of this regulatory policy.

⁷ SOR/2023-203, 29 November 2023. Under these requirements, online broadcasting undertakings register with the Commission unless they, either alone or as part of a broadcasting ownership group, have less than \$10 million in annual broadcasting revenues in Canada or only provide video game or audiobook services.

⁸ Traditional broadcasters' online platforms, such as CTV.ca, allow subscribers to access their programming online via computers or mobile devices.

17. From an implementation perspective, the fact that the Registration Regulations are already in place provides immediate transparency and clarity as to which online streaming undertakings will be subject to this regulatory policy.
18. Some interveners questioned whether this regulatory policy should apply to community programming. The Commission notes that independent community programming undertakings are unlikely to earn \$10 million or more in annual Canadian gross broadcasting revenue and would therefore be exempt from the Registration Regulations and this regulatory policy. Community programming originating from community channels operated by a licensed Canadian broadcasting distribution undertaking (BDU) would be captured by this regulatory policy if that programming is made available online by an undertaking to which the Registration Regulations apply.
19. Consistent with the Notice, this proceeding addresses only online streaming undertakings, which the Commission has considered distinct from online unique transaction services such as one-time rental or purchase of an individual program transmitted or retransmitted over the Internet.⁹
20. In addition, the Commission notes that some online streaming undertakings submitted that they operate websites with predominantly alphanumeric text that may also include some video content, and that providing closed captioning on this type of website is particularly challenging. These submissions were made by online undertakings that also operate websites primarily offering sports news in alphanumeric format and in the form of highlight clips.
21. The Commission's regulatory authority extends to "programs,"¹⁰ a category which does not include visual images that consist predominantly of alphanumeric text. While audio-visual clips could be considered programs, the purpose of this proceeding is not to create rules for informational websites featuring primarily alphanumeric text. Accordingly, these types of websites are not subject to this regulatory policy. However, when the operators of such websites also operate online streaming undertakings, the programs that appear on those undertakings are subject to this regulatory policy.
22. Finally, consistent with the Act and the Policy Direction, this regulatory policy does not apply to the programs of social media creators on social media services.
23. In light of the above, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings that must register under the Registration Regulations to be subject to this regulatory policy and its related conditions of service on closed captioning. These conditions of service are set out in Appendix 2 to this regulatory policy.

⁹ See Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329 and Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2024-65.

¹⁰ The Act defines a "program" as "sounds or visual images, or a combination of sounds and visual images, that are intended to inform, enlighten or entertain, but does not include visual images, whether or not combined with sounds, that consist predominantly of alphanumeric text."

Types of programs to be closed captioned

24. The Commission notes that while most online streaming undertakings make closed captioning widely available, not all do so. Online streaming undertakings that feature predominantly third-party programs tend to provide less closed captioning than those featuring more original¹¹ programs. Some online streaming undertakings submitted that this difference is due to their lesser degree of control over the creation of third-party programs.
25. The Commission finds that online streaming undertakings that are subject to this regulatory policy must make closed captioning consistently available on both original and third-party programming.
26. Further, consistent with how closed captioning obligations are imposed on the traditional Canadian television broadcasters, this regulatory policy applies only to English- and French-language programs.

Original pre-recorded programs

27. Most DDBHH individuals and accessibility groups who intervened in this proceeding submitted that 100% of programs broadcast by online streaming undertakings should be closed captioned. Some submitted that technology has advanced far enough to enable these undertakings to meet this threshold.
28. Many online streaming undertakings submitted that they provide closed captioning for the vast majority of original pre-recorded programs¹² that they make available on their platforms, with some exceptions, such as archived programs that were not captioned originally.
29. Many online streaming undertakings supported a requirement to provide closed captioning for 100% of their original pre-recorded programs going forward. However, they objected to the imposition of an immediate 100% closed captioning requirement for this type of program that is already in their catalogues.
30. The Commission considers that requiring online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning for all new original pre-recorded programs would ensure that the most popular programs are closed captioned.
31. The Commission notes, however, that some interveners raised concerns about the capacity of closed captioning resources to meet a sudden or significant increase in demand, and that online streaming undertakings would need some time to adjust their closed captioning policies and

¹¹ For the purposes of this regulatory policy, an original program (whether live or pre-recorded) is one that is created or commissioned by an online streaming undertaking, or a related entity, and made available on its platform.

¹² Pre-recorded programs are those that are delivered in their entirety to the online streaming undertaking before they are to be made available to audiences.

practices to comply with this regulatory policy. Therefore, the Commission considers that imposing a requirement to immediately provide closed captioning for 100% of original pre-recorded programs could strain closed captioning resources and could result in inconsistency in the quality of the closed captioning produced.

32. As such, the Commission considers it appropriate to set a one-year timeframe for online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning for 100% of new original pre-recorded programs. Unless otherwise indicated, this requirement, as well as the requirements set out below, will take effect one year after the publication of this regulatory policy and will apply going forward.¹³
33. In light of the above, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning for 100% of their new original pre-recorded English- or French-language programs broadcast on their platforms, no later than one year from the date of publication of this regulatory policy.

Programs originally broadcast on linear television with closed captioning

34. Traditional Canadian television broadcasters are currently expected to ensure that when programs with closed captioning on traditional platforms are made available on non-linear platforms operated by the broadcaster, the closed captioning is included. Some interveners suggested that all online streaming undertakings be expected to include closed captioning on programs that were previously closed captioned on traditional television platforms.
35. Some interveners also noted that the United States (US) has a similar rule¹⁴ and proposed that the Commission harmonize its closed captioning rules with those in the US.
36. Given this context, the Commission considers that online streaming undertakings should make closed captioning available for programs that have already been broadcast on traditional television with closed captioning.
37. In light of the above, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning for 100% of English- and French-language programs broadcast on their platforms, including live programs, that were previously broadcast on linear television with closed captioning.

Live programs

38. In their interventions, DDBHH individuals, accessibility groups, and consumer advocacy groups submitted that 100% of live programs should be provided with closed captioning, including live

¹³ See Appendix 2 for a list of the proposed orders and the dates they come into effect.

¹⁴ Federal Communications Commission, *Closed Captioning of Video Programming Delivered Using Internet Protocol*, 47 CFR § 79.4 (2014).

sports and news. Some argued that since many live programs are broadcast on linear television with closed captioning, this change could be easily implemented.

39. Some online streaming undertakings stated that it is not always possible to provide closed captioning for certain types of programs, including news segments, ancillary sports feeds with no dialogue, and live third-party programs.
40. Most online streaming undertakings agreed that it should be a requirement to provide all closed captioning included in live programs but did not think they should be required to add closed captioning to live programs offered by a third party when closed captioning is absent. Some online streaming undertakings indicated that to do so would not be feasible due to technical challenges; others submitted that it would be challenging to do so because of limited resources or capacity, given that they stream multiple live feeds at once.
41. The Commission notes that while most live programs made available by online streaming undertakings are provided by a third party, some of these undertakings may themselves create or commission original live programs and may expand those offerings in the future. The Commission considers that it is possible for online streaming undertakings that choose to offer original live programs to incorporate closed captioning by design due to the control they have over the creation of the program.
42. Regarding live third-party programs, the Commission considers that online streaming undertakings should be required to include the closed captioning when it is provided by the third-party supplier.
43. In light of the above, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning for 100% of original English- and French-language live programs. Further, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings to include closed captioning for live English- and French-language programs when made available by a third-party supplier.
44. While the Commission acknowledges the challenges associated with inserting closed captioning when it is not included with live third-party programs, it encourages online streaming undertakings to ensure closed captioning is provided for all live programs provided by third parties. It will monitor progress in this area through an annual reporting requirement, detailed below in the section entitled, "Implementation and reporting."

Program catalogues

45. In their submissions, some DDBHH individuals and accessibility groups expressed a wish for the entire program catalogues of online streaming undertakings to be provided with closed captioning. Some, however, acknowledged that closed captioning older programs may pose challenges. One accessibility group suggested that online streaming undertakings should provide closed captioning for 90% of their catalogues within one year, and 100% within two years.

46. Many online streaming undertakings submitted that they were nearing 100% closed captioning of their programs, while others submitted that they were in the 50-80% range.
47. Most online streaming undertakings submitted that it would be challenging for them to provide closed captioning for their entire catalogue due to the volume of programs in their catalogues. In some cases, these catalogues amount to thousands of hours of content stretching back years. They stated that, in many instances, the terms of their licensing agreements could create difficulties, and in other instances there would be technical limitations or challenges to adding captions. Some online streaming undertakings noted the technical complexity of the online broadcasting environment, submitting that their services can involve a variety of hardware, software, and program applications operating on multiple devices and platforms.
48. Online streaming undertakings also submitted that a requirement to provide closed captioning of their entire catalogue of programs would impact consumers, industry, and businesses, and could result in a reduction of total content made available.
49. Some online streaming undertakings suggested adopting a phased-in approach (e.g., over five years) to ensure a smoother transition.
50. The Commission acknowledges that closed captioning resources could be strained by the demand generated from a requirement to provide closed captioning for 100% of program catalogues within a short timeframe. Such a requirement could risk overwhelming human closed captioning resources and would likely require the significant use of automated or artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. Individuals and accessibility groups consider closed captioning created by automated or AI technologies to be of lower quality when used without human oversight.
51. The Commission is of the view that, as automated or AI closed captioning technologies become more sophisticated, it may become more feasible to provide closed captioning for large numbers of previously uncaptioned programs. These technologies may also give online streaming undertakings an additional opportunity to create closed captioning when it is missing from third-party programs.
52. The Commission has traditionally taken a phased-in approach when developing its accessibility frameworks and will apply a similar approach to this regulatory policy – specifically, a five-year phase-in period.
53. The Commission considers this approach best for eliminating barriers to access without overwhelming closed captioning resources. In addition to allowing time for the development of closed captioning resources, the phase-in period will allow online streaming undertakings time to make changes to their contractual arrangements where necessary. These measures should help avoid incentivising online streaming undertakings to reduce content offered. On balance, the Commission considers that this approach will best ensure continued access to the diversity of programs available from these undertakings.

54. The Commission encourages online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning for the most popular programs first, in order to benefit the widest possible audience as soon as possible.
55. In light of the above, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning for 80% of programs available on their platforms within four years of the date of publication of this regulatory policy, followed by 100% of programs available on their platforms within five years of the date of publication of this regulatory policy. It also encourages online streaming undertakings to focus on providing closed captioning for the programs most frequently streamed.
56. Finally, for transparency and monitoring purposes, the Commission will require that online streaming undertakings report annually on their progress providing closed captioning for their program catalogues over the course of the five-year period. This reporting requirement is detailed below in the section entitled “Implementation and reporting.”

Programs sourced from exempt on-demand services

57. Exempt Canadian on-demand services¹⁵ do not have closed captioning requirements. These are on-demand services offered by small, exempt BDUs with fewer than 20,000 subscribers.
58. Some interveners suggested that if an online streaming undertaking operates as the online extension of a traditional BDU, and all or some of its programming is sourced from an exempt Canadian on demand service, that undertaking should be exempt from closed captioning requirements.
59. Some interveners argued that online extensions of traditional BDUs have no control over uncaptioned programming from exempt BDUs and should therefore not be required to guarantee the availability of closed captioning. Some also suggested that due to the large volume of programs available through this type of service, it would be impossible to insert missing closed captioning, and that any requirement to do so could result in that program being removed from the service.
60. The Commission is of the view that if an online undertaking is sourcing programming from an exempt Canadian on-demand service, it will most likely be the online extension of an exempt BDU and will therefore be a smaller undertaking with a smaller number of subscribers. Just as these services do not have the same closed captioning obligations as larger undertakings in the traditional broadcasting system, the Commission considers that it would be reasonable for them to have different obligations online as well.
61. In light of the above, when an online streaming undertaking is operating as the online extension of a traditional BDU, that undertaking will not be required to provide closed captioning on programs from exempt Canadian on-demand services.

¹⁵ See Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2015-355 and Broadcasting Order 2015-356.

Advertisements, promotional programs, and short-form programs

62. In their interventions, many DDBHH individuals, accessibility groups, and consumer advocacy groups submitted that all programs should be provided with closed captioning, but few specifically commented on advertisements, promotional programs, or short-form programs.
63. Most online streaming undertakings that submitted interventions opposed any closed captioning requirements related to advertisements. They argued there would be significant operational and technical challenges to providing closed captioning for advertisements that are unique to the online environment, including that they lacked sufficient control over advertisements for a closed captioning requirement to be feasible. For example, in their responses to RFIs, several online streaming undertakings submitted that unlike advertising on linear television, which typically broadcasts the same advertisements to all viewers within the same region, online streaming undertakings frequently use dynamic advertising. They described advertisements under this model as being selected and controlled by a third party.
64. As noted above, the Commission acknowledges the challenges associated with closed captioning third-party content. In the present context, requiring advertisements to be closed captioned could result in fewer ad-supported services being offered in Canada if online streaming undertakings are unable to guarantee the provision of closed captioning at this time.
65. The Commission notes that similar challenges would exist for promotional and short-form programs provided by third parties. Nonetheless, it expects online streaming undertakings to include closed captioning when it is made available by third parties.
66. The Commission considers that promotional programs (i.e., trailers or advertisements for full-length programs) and short-form programs, such as excerpts of full-length programs, shorts, and bonus programs created by online streaming undertakings, can be closed captioned more easily because they are more directly within the online streaming undertaking's control and are pre-recorded.
67. The Commission will therefore require online streaming undertakings to provide closed captioning of all promotional and short-form programs that they create.
68. Regarding advertisements, promotional programs, and short-form programs provided by third parties, the Commission expects online streaming undertakings to include closed captioning when it is made available by third parties.
69. The Commission does, however, consider that a reporting requirement on the provision of closed captioning for third-party advertisements, promotional programs, and short-form programs is necessary so that it can monitor progress of closed captioning for those programs and determine whether further requirements should be considered in a future proceeding. This reporting requirement is detailed below in the section entitled "Implementation and reporting."

Quality standards

70. The Commission has previously stated¹⁶ that closed captioning of poor quality can make programs inaccessible. High-quality captions are those that are accurate, allowing an experience that is comparable to that of someone using the audio feed.
71. Currently, traditional television broadcasters in Canada must caption pre-recorded programs with 100% accuracy, including spelling, for both English- and French-language programs. They must also follow requirements related to closed captioning positioning, speed, and format.¹⁷

Original pre-recorded programs

72. In their interventions, most DDBHH individuals, accessibility groups, and consumer advocacy groups submitted that pre-recorded programs should be held to a 100% accuracy rate (i.e., verbatim) since they are made in advance.
73. Most online streaming undertakings submitted that pre-recorded programs with closed captioning go through an internal quality control process and that much of their content complies with the closed captioning quality standards for Canadian traditional broadcasters because it was originally broadcast on linear television.
74. In their interventions, US-based online streaming undertakings indicated that their closed captioning quality complies with the US Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) requirements for quality¹⁸ (i.e., accuracy, synchronicity, program completeness, and placement), and that any quality standards imposed on online streaming undertakings should be harmonized with these criteria-based standards.
75. In their interventions, some online streaming undertakings argued that specific requirements for closed captioning formatting could impede innovation and unnecessarily restrict users' ability to customize how closed captioning is displayed.
76. The Commission considers that its quality standards and those of the FCC have, at their core, the same objective, which is to ensure that persons who rely on closed captioning are able to enjoy programs in a similar way to those who rely on the audio feed.
77. In regard to original pre-recorded programs, the Commission considers that the degree of effort made by online streaming undertakings to ensure the audio feed of a program is clear and error-free should also apply to the closed captioning that accompanies that program. The Commission

¹⁶ See paragraph 2 of Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2019-308.

¹⁷ See Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2011-741 and Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2019-308.

¹⁸ Federal Communications Commission, *Closed Captioning of Video Programming on Television*, 47 CFR § 79.1 (2014); Federal Communications Commission, *Closed Captioning of Video Programming Delivered Using Internet Protocol*, 47 CFR § 79.4 (2014).

notes that pre-recorded programs have the benefit of being created and delivered to a streaming platform prior to being made available to the public.

78. The Commission therefore considers it reasonable to require online streaming undertakings to ensure that their own new original pre-recorded programs feature high-quality closed captioning that is 100% accurate.
79. In addition to reflecting the on-screen dialogue in a program accurately, the Commission considers that closed captioning must reflect non-speech contextual information, such as a description of sound effects, what music is playing, and the identity of speakers and their manner of speaking. Ensuring that non-speech contextual information is provided in the closed captioning allows everyone who accesses the programs to have a comparable experience.
80. The Commission therefore considers that, for the purposes of this regulatory policy, “accurate” closed captioning should be defined as closed captioning that matches the on-screen dialogue and is correctly spelled; that conveys background noises, music, and other sounds; and that identifies speakers and their manner of speaking, to the fullest extent possible.
81. The Commission acknowledges that a variety of specific closed captioning standards related to lag time or synchronicity, completeness, and closed captioning placement exist internationally, and that these may also allow or require the customization of closed captioning by users. Apart from the Commission’s quality standards for traditional Canadian broadcasters, the FCC’s quality standards were referenced most frequently by interveners in this proceeding.
82. The Commission’s aim is to establish standards that are consistent with the requirements imposed on Canadian traditional broadcasters and that do not conflict with the FCC’s closed captioning quality standards or interfere with closed captioning customization. As a result, the Commission is setting out standards to address placement, lag time or synchronicity, and completeness.
83. The Commission considers that captions must be placed so as to avoid covering action, visual elements, or any information required to understand the message, and must not overlap one another or run off the edge of the screen, unless the user has deliberately customized the captions in a way that does not match this standard. Regarding lag time or synchronicity, captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers. For completeness, captions must also run from the beginning to the end of the program, to the fullest extent possible.
84. In light of the above, the Commission will require 100% accuracy for new original pre-recorded programs, which includes accurate spelling, non-speech contextual information (such as background noises, music, and other sounds), and the identity of speakers and their manner of speaking, to the fullest extent possible. It will also require compliance with the following additional quality standards for original pre-recorded programs:

- (i) Placement: Captions must be positioned to avoid covering action, visual elements, or any information required to understand the message, must not overlap one another, and must not run off the edge of the screen. The placement of captions must meet this standard unless the user has deliberately customized the captions in a way that does not match the standard;
- (ii) Lag time or synchronicity: Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and must be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers; and
- (iii) Completeness: Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the program, to the fullest extent possible.

Original live programs

85. On traditional television, the existing accuracy rate for the closed captioning of live French-language programs is 85%, and live English-language programs must have an accuracy rate of 98 points based on the Canadian Number, Edition error and Recognition error (NER)¹⁹ model.²⁰ Certified NER evaluators²¹ trained in Canada must be used to conduct monthly assessments for live English-language programs.
86. One accessibility group submitted that an accuracy rate of 100% should be the target for live English- and French-language programs. Other accessibility groups and some online streaming undertakings submitted that the target should match the accuracy rate requirements imposed on traditional television broadcasters.
87. In their interventions, online streaming undertakings expressed varying views on the quality standards for closed captioning of live programs. For instance, one suggested that there should be different standards for live English- and French-language programs, which would be consistent with the accuracy standards for traditional Canadian broadcasters. Others argued that this distinction was no longer necessary. Another suggested that accuracy should be the only quality standard applied to live programs at this time, or that it would be inappropriate to use the

¹⁹ NER is a method of evaluating the accuracy of live closed captioning. It compares the verbatim transcript from a program to the captioned transcript, and then determines the discrepancies between them using a point system. A detailed description of the Canadian NER model is outlined in Appendix 2 of Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2019-308.

²⁰ The accuracy rate and measurement models for English- and French-language live programming were established based on proposals by two separate industry-led working groups, one for the English-language market and one for the French-language market. These working groups were composed of representatives of associations and advocacy groups for persons who are DDBHH, closed captioning providers, and broadcasters, who proposed reasonable criteria that balanced feasibility with the needs of their audiences.

²¹ According to the [NER Advisory Council](#), as of July 2025 there were 22 NER-certified evaluators and 2 organizations offering NER training.

Canadian NER model to assess accuracy given that the model is not used anywhere outside of Canada.

88. The Commission notes that there was no consensus amongst interveners on how the accuracy of live programs should be measured, or what the target for accuracy should be. Moreover, the Commission considers that there is insufficient information on the record to justify, at this time, imposing on online streaming undertakings the accuracy standards that apply to live programs by traditional Canadian broadcasters.
89. The Commission notes that most programs available on online streaming undertakings are pre-recorded programs, and requirements related to accuracy and other quality standards are being imposed on pre-recorded programs in this regulatory policy. The Commission considers that this is a significant step towards ensuring that the closed captioning provided by online streaming undertakings is of high quality.
90. The Commission states that the quality of closed captioning for live programs will be monitored by the Commission through complaints data and information provided in the annual closed captioning reports. This monitoring will help the Commission gain a deeper understanding of the challenges associated with providing high-quality closed captioning for live programs, to identify any systemic issues that may arise, and to determine whether further requirements should be considered in a future proceeding. This reporting requirement is detailed below in the section entitled “Implementation and reporting.”
91. In light of the above, the Commission is not imposing specific accuracy rates on original live programs, at this time.

Third-party programs

92. Some online streaming undertakings submitted that due to their lack of control over the large volume of third-party programs available in their catalogues, quality control for closed captioning of these types of programs would be extremely difficult. Others submitted that automated or AI closed captioning technology has not evolved sufficiently to produce high-quality closed captioning.
93. Some online streaming undertakings stated that requiring a 100% accuracy rate for programs provided by a third party would limit the number of titles published or licensed for a Canadian audience.
94. The Commission acknowledges that, currently, online streaming undertakings generally lack control over the quality of closed captioning for third-party programs and that it would be difficult for them to comply with quality standards for these types of programs.
95. In light of the above, the Commission is not imposing specific accuracy rates on third-party programs, at this time.

96. However, given the importance of having high-quality closed captioning, the Commission encourages online streaming undertakings to work with third-party program suppliers to ensure the closed captioning of their programs, when made available, is of high quality, and that it meets the quality standards for accuracy, placement, lag time or synchronicity, and completeness.
97. The Commission notes that, as automated or AI closed captioning technologies become more sophisticated, closed captioning large quantities of content may become more feasible and may give online streaming undertakings an additional opportunity to create high-quality closed captioning when it is missing from third-party programs. The Commission therefore intends to revisit this issue in a future proceeding.
98. Until that time, the Commission will monitor complaints about the quality of closed captioning for third-party programs. It will review the information provided by online streaming undertakings in their annual reports regarding their efforts to ensure that, when closed captioning is provided by third parties, it is of high quality. This reporting requirement is detailed below in the section entitled “Implementation and reporting.”

User experience

Enhancing usability – Closed captioning

99. In their interventions, some DDBHH individuals and accessibility groups requested that users be able to customize the appearance of closed captioning for their individual needs. Customization can include defining the background and foreground colour of closed captioning, font type, and the contour or border of fonts. For example, one accessibility group submitted that colour adjustments are a significant consideration in ensuring full accessibility for those who are DeafBlind and wish to adjust settings according to their needs.
100. The Commission notes that some online streaming undertakings provide customization options for closed captioning.
101. The Commission considers that closed captioning customization may reduce barriers for certain users, such as DeafBlind users, and that online streaming undertakings should report on their progress in implementing customization given the importance of this feature for users.
102. In their interventions, some DDBHH individuals expressed frustration that turning on closed captioning is not the same for all online streaming undertakings. Most online streaming undertakings submitted that they allow users to turn on closed captioning directly when viewing a program, rather than having to go into general settings.
103. The Commission considers that it is important for persons who are DDBHH to have an easy and accessible way to turn on closed captioning. Minimizing the number of steps required to turn on closed captioning, for example, would simplify the process and could have the added benefit of making the process more consistent across online streaming undertakings. The Commission is of

the view that a best practice would be for a user to be able to turn on closed captioning with the same ease as playing or pausing the program, actions typically done using the primary media controls, the set of controls that the user most commonly uses to control the streaming platform.

104. In light of the above, the Commission expects online streaming undertakings to allow user customization of closed captioning, and expects these undertakings to ensure that users can easily activate closed captioning by minimizing the number of steps needed to turn on closed captioning. For example, a user should be able to turn on closed captioning using the primary media controls.
105. The Commission intends, in a future proceeding, to examine whether these expectations should be converted into requirements.

Complaints process

106. In their interventions, some DDBHH individuals, accessibility groups, and online streaming undertakings stated that online streaming undertakings should have the opportunity to address complaints before they are escalated to the Commission.
107. The Commission notes that most, if not all, online streaming undertakings already have a complaints mechanism in place.
108. Many online streaming undertakings also submitted that the accessibility feedback mechanisms required under the *Accessible Canada Act* are sufficient to address users' concerns related to closed captioning.
109. At this time, the practice in place for traditional broadcasters allows for complaints to be treated by the Commission or by the provider directly. The Commission has found this practice to work effectively and considers it appropriate to expand this practice to online streaming undertakings.
110. To facilitate this approach, the Commission considers that online streaming undertakings should document complaints and, if possible, retain a copy of programs no longer available on their services for 30 days while a complaint is in progress, in the event the Commission needs to examine the program.
111. In light of the above, the Commission expects online streaming undertakings to document the closed captioning errors reported by complainants and, if possible, to retain a copy of programs no longer available on their services for 30 days while a complaint is in progress.
112. The Commission will address any alleged non-compliance by online streaming undertakings brought to its attention through the filing of complaints and may explore imposing additional requirements, including further monitoring requirements, in cases of repeated non-compliance.

113. In addition, the Commission will impose a reporting requirement on online streaming undertakings to submit, on an annual basis, the number of complaints they have received related to closed captioning. This information will be posted on the Commission's website as part of the undertaking's annual report. This reporting requirement is detailed below in the section entitled "Implementation and reporting."
114. The Commission further emphasizes the importance of the "no wrong door" principle, which ensures that, regardless of which avenue or mechanism a person uses to submit an accessibility-related complaint to the Commission, that complaint will be referred internally to the organization, group, or individual best suited to address the issue.
115. Finally, some online streaming undertakings incorporate a flag or button on their user interface that can be clicked to identify programs that have closed captioning errors. The Commission considers that such a measure may significantly speed up the identification of programs with closed captioning errors and make it easier for online streaming undertakings to correct issues as they arise without the user having to formally file a complaint.
116. In light of the above, the Commission encourages online streaming undertakings to incorporate a flag or button on their user interface that can be clicked to identify programs that have closed captioning errors, if such a function is not already in place.

Consultations with Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing communities

117. Many accessibility groups submitted that online streaming undertakings should be required to maintain an open dialogue with DDBHH communities.
118. Many online streaming undertakings submitted that they regularly consult with persons with disabilities. Many also referenced the *Accessible Canada Act* requirement to consult on their accessibility plans and reports and expressed concerns that an additional requirement to consult with closed captioning users on a regular basis could lead to consultation fatigue.
119. Some online streaming undertakings also expressed concerns about the administrative burden of additional consultations.
120. The Commission considers that gathering input from those who rely on closed captioning would support the meaningful implementation of this regulatory policy, and that online streaming undertakings should consult specifically on closed captioning, and not just on accessibility in general. The Commission notes that consultation related to closed captioning can be done in conjunction with the consultations required under the *Accessible Canada Act*.
121. In light of the above, the Commission expects online streaming undertakings (either collectively or individually) to consult, on an annual basis, individuals and groups in DDBHH communities about closed captioning policies and practices.

Assessing the need for a working group

122. In their interventions, most DDBHH individuals and accessibility groups supported the idea of a working group; however, there was no consensus on who should lead the group.
123. Many online streaming undertakings submitted that since they regularly consult with persons with disabilities, a requirement to participate in a working group could introduce an administrative burden and result in consultation fatigue for the users of closed captioning. One online streaming undertaking submitted that it participates in two international working groups related to accessibility practices.
124. Moreover, despite the Commission's follow-up questions on the proposed structure of a closed captioning working group, the record remained unclear on the matters of which organizations would be best positioned to lead or coordinate a working group, how the group would operate, and what its mandate would be.
125. The Commission considers that the reporting requirements imposed on online streaming undertakings in this proceeding will enable the Commission to monitor their progress with respect to closed captioning.
126. In light of the above, the Commission does not consider it appropriate to require the formation of a working group at this time.

Implementation and reporting

Implementation timeframes and reports

127. Most parties agreed that it would take time to roll out any new requirements related to closed captioning. Most DDBHH individuals and accessibility groups submitted that the requirements should come into effect within six months to one year. Most online streaming undertakings submitted that any new requirements should be phased in over three to five years.
128. The Commission considers that most of the requirements can be implemented within a year of publication of this regulatory policy, particularly those that apply going forward. For more challenging requirements, like the requirement to provide closed captioning for entire program catalogues, the Commission is providing a longer implementation period of up to five years.
129. As a result, the majority of this regulatory policy and the conditions of service it proposes for online streaming undertakings will come into effect one year after the date of publication of the regulatory policy.
130. To ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the new measures set out in this regulatory policy and the conditions of service it proposes, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings to file an implementation report confirming their compliance with the requirements set out in Appendix 2, by **25 June 2027**.

131. As part of the implementation reports, online streaming undertakings that find it challenging to meet the obligations set out in this regulatory policy should outline the specific challenges they are experiencing, explain the steps they are taking to address those challenges, and provide a timeline for when they expect to comply with these obligations.

Annual reports

132. The Commission considers that, for transparency and monitoring purposes, online streaming undertakings should report annually to the Commission on their activities. Following the initial implementation report, online streaming undertakings will have an annual reporting requirement starting in 2027. The annual closed captioning reports will be due on 30 November of each year and will cover the period of the previous 1 September to 31 August. The Commission acknowledges that this reporting requirement is creating some regulatory burden; however, the Commission has aimed to minimize the impact of this reporting while still enabling the Commission and accessibility stakeholders to monitor progress towards the *Accessible Canada Act*'s objective to make Canada free from barriers for persons with disabilities by 2040.

133. Each online streaming undertaking's annual reports must include information on:

- internal closed captioning quality standards they employ for original live programs, including standards for accuracy, lag time or synchronicity, placement, and completeness;
- efforts to ensure that the closed captioning provided by third parties, when available, is of high quality, including standards for accuracy, placement, lag time or synchronicity, and completeness, and any internal quality control processes in use or in development for third-party programs;
- the number of complaints received related to closed captioning; and
- its progress:
 - providing closed captioning for non-original live programs on an annual basis;
 - providing closed captioning for 80% of programs available on its platforms by 27 May 2030, followed by 100% of programs available on its platforms by 26 May 2031, until it can confirm its compliance with these benchmarks;
 - providing closed captioning for advertisements, promotional programs, and short-form programs provided by third parties; and
 - implementing caption customization.

134. All documents can be filed electronically using the secured service [My CRTC Account](#).

Conclusion

135. In light of all of the above, the Commission concludes that the measures set out in this regulatory policy will help ensure persons who are DDBHH have access to programs that are accessible without barriers, regardless of whether they are accessing programs online or through traditional television services.
136. This regulatory policy aims to ensure that barriers to accessing programs are identified, removed, and prevented for persons who are DDBHH, regardless of the platform.

The proposed orders imposing conditions of service

137. As noted above, the Commission determined that the regulatory policy on closed captioning will apply to all audio-visual online streaming undertakings that have to register under the Registration Regulations.
138. The Commission is proposing orders under subsections 9.1(1) and 9.1(4) of the Act that would impose conditions of service to implement the obligations set out in this regulatory policy on online streaming undertakings.²²
139. Under paragraph 9.1(1)(k) of the Act, the Commission has the authority to impose conditions respecting access by persons with disabilities to programming, including the identification, prevention and removal of barriers to such access. Paragraph 9.1(1)(o) of the Act gives the Commission the authority to impose conditions on persons carrying on broadcasting undertakings with respect to the provision of information that it considers necessary for the administration of the Act, such as information related to programming.
140. Interested persons may file comments on the proposed orders by no later than **25 June 2026** and may submit a reply to any comments received by no later than **6 July 2026**. If there are no comments, the orders will be finalized and imposed as proposed.
141. The specifics of the proposed orders are set out in Appendix 2 to this regulatory policy.

Secretary General

²² Subsection 9.1(2) of the Act gives the authority to the Commission to impose conditions of service on a class of undertakings, such as online streaming undertakings.

Appendix 1 to Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2026-98

Legal Framework

1. On 27 April 2023, the *Online Streaming Act* came into effect.¹ This act includes, among other things, amendments to the *Broadcasting Act* (the Act) that reinforce the importance of the provision of programs that are accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities. Pursuant to paragraph 3(1)(p.1) of the Act, programming that is accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities should be provided within the Canadian broadcasting system, including without limitation, closed captioning services available to assist persons who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing (DDBHH).
2. On 22 November 2023, the Government of Canada published an *Order Issuing Directions to the CRTC (Sustainable and Equitable Broadcasting Regulatory Framework)*² (the Policy Direction), a policy direction that guides the Commission in its implementation of the amended Act. Among other requirements, it directs the Commission to regulate and supervise the Canadian broadcasting system with a view to supporting the provision of programming that is accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities.
3. The Commission considers that this regulatory policy contributes significantly to the objectives of the Act and is in line with the Policy Direction by extending closed captioning policies and obligations to an additional class of broadcasting undertaking.
4. The regulatory policy is also consistent with the Act's regulatory objective that the Canadian broadcasting system should be regulated and supervised in a flexible manner that facilitates the provision of programs that are accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities.³ The Commission considers that the requirements and expectations in the regulatory policy strike an effective balance between offering flexibility to online streaming undertakings where appropriate and removing barriers to access wherever possible by:
 - creating different rules based on the type of program (e.g., pre-recorded, live, advertising, promotional programs, short-form programs);
 - taking into consideration the element of program control (i.e., original vs. third-party programs);
 - using a phased approach that ramps up requirements over time and makes clear the Commission's intention to revisit certain issues; and

¹ An Act to amend the *Broadcasting Act* and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, S.C. 2023, c.8.

² SOR/2023-239, 22 November 2023.

³ Paragraph 5(2)(e.1) of the Act.

- refraining from being overly prescriptive in terms of what closed captioning technologies are used.
5. Finally, the Commission is of the view that this proceeding and the resulting regulatory policy are consistent with the goal of the *Accessible Canada Act* to make Canada free from barriers for persons with disabilities by 2040, as well as with principles of that Act that all persons are to have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, that policies must take into account the disabilities of persons, and that persons with disabilities must be involved in the development of those policies. The steps taken to make the proceeding accessible to persons who are DDBHH, outlined in the previous section and in the resulting regulatory policy, align with these principles.

Appendix 2 to Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2026-98

Proposed orders imposing conditions of service for audio-visual online streaming undertakings

Pursuant to subsections 9.1(1) and 9.1(4) of the *Broadcasting Act* (the Act) the Commission proposes to make orders imposing the following conditions of service on the carrying on of certain audio-visual online streaming undertakings.

The orders come into effect on **25 May 2027**, unless otherwise specified in this order.

Interpretation

The following definitions apply in this order:

An “original program” is a program created or commissioned by an online streaming undertaking, or a related entity, and made available on its platform.

A reference to “program” only includes a program in which the original language is English or French.

Application

The proposed conditions of service set out herein apply to the operators carrying on audio-visual online streaming undertakings that must register pursuant to the *Online Undertakings Registration Regulations*¹ and *Online Undertakings Registration Regulations, and exemption order regarding those regulations*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2023-329 and Broadcasting Order CRTC 2023-330, 29 September 2023. The proposed conditions of service do not apply in respect to the unique transaction services of these online undertakings.

The proposed conditions of service also do not apply when the undertaking is operating as the online extension of a traditional broadcasting distribution undertaking and, in that capacity, is broadcasting programs from a Canadian on-demand service operating pursuant to an exemption order issued by the Commission under subsection 9(4) of the Act.

Conditions of service

1. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall provide closed captioning for 100% of new original pre-recorded programs broadcast on their platforms.

¹ SOR/2023-203, 29 September 2023.

2. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall provide closed captioning for 100% of programs broadcast on their platforms that have previously been broadcast on linear television with captions.
3. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall provide closed captioning for 100% of their original live programs.
4. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall include closed captioning for non-original live programs when made available by a third-party supplier.
5. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall provide closed captioning for 80% of programs available on their platforms by **27 May 2030**, followed by 100% of programs available on their platforms by **26 May 2031**.²
6. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall provide closed captioning for 100% of promotional and short-form original programs.
7. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall attain 100% accuracy for new original pre-recorded programs. Accuracy refers to captions that match the spoken words in the dialogue, that include accurate spelling, and that convey non-speech contextual information, such as background noises, music, and other sounds, as well as the identity of speakers and their manner of speaking, to the fullest extent possible.
8. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall adhere to the following additional quality standards for new original pre-recorded programs:
 - (a) Placement: Captions must be positioned to avoid covering action, visual elements, or any information required to understand the message, must not overlap one another, and must not run off the edge of the screen. The placement of captions must meet this standard unless the user has deliberately customized the captions in a way that does not match the standard;
 - (b) Lag time or synchronicity: Captions must coincide with their corresponding spoken words and sounds to the greatest extent possible and must be displayed on the screen at a speed that can be read by viewers; and
 - (c) Completeness: Captions must run from the beginning to the end of the program, to the fullest extent possible.

² Programs from exempt Canadian on-demand services do not need to be captioned by the online streaming undertakings and are excluded from this requirement.

9. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings must submit an implementation report confirming their compliance with the requirements listed above by **25 June 2027**.
10. Beginning in 2027, audio-visual online streaming undertakings shall submit a report by 30 November of each year that details, for the 12-month period ending on the previous 31 August:
 - (a) what internal closed captioning quality standards they employ for original live programs, including standards for accuracy, lag time or synchronicity, placement, and completeness;
 - (b) what they are doing to ensure that the closed captioning provided by third parties, when available, is of high quality, including standards for accuracy, placement, lag time or synchronicity, and completeness, and any internal quality control processes in use or in development for non-original programs;
 - (c) the number of complaints received related to closed captioning on an annual basis; and
 - (d) their progress:
 - (i) providing closed captioning for non-original live programs on an annual basis;
 - (ii) achieving the benchmarks set out in condition of service 5 in their annual closed captioning report until they can confirm their compliance with the 100% benchmark;
 - (iii) providing closed captioning for advertisements, non-original promotional programs and short-form programs; and
 - (iv) implementing caption customization.

Related documents

- *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, modified by Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-137-1, 10 September 2024 and Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-137-2, 18 November 2024
- *Broadcasting Fees Regulations*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2024-65, 21 March 2024
- *Online Undertakings Registration Regulations, and exemption order regarding those regulations*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2023-329 and Broadcasting Order CRTC 2023-330, 29 September 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, modified by Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2019-308-1, 20 September 2019
- *Revised exemption order for certain classes of video-on-demand (VOD) undertakings and updated standard conditions of licence for licensed VOD undertakings*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2015-355 and Broadcasting Order CRTC 2015-356, 6 August 2015
- *Quality standards for French-language closed captioning*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2011-741, 1 December 2011, modified by Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2011-741-1, 21 February 2012