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ESTABLISHED BY BLIND WAR VETERANS IN 1944

16 November 2011

Mr. John Traversy
Secretary General
CRTC
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N2

Dear Mr. Traversy:

Re: Broadcasting Accessibility Fund and Media Access Canada, MAC

The Canadian Council of the Blind (CCB) was founded in 1944 by blind war veterans and schools of the blind. All officers and directors are blind or visually impaired which gives a unique sensitivity to the needs of the blind community. The CCB has over 65 chapters across Canada, making it the largest membership based organization of the blind. CCB is a voting member of the Access 2020 Coalition.

An area that presents great challenges today is equal access to television broadcasting. We are therefore pleased to be involved in the Access 2020 Coalition and therefore in MAC.

CCB supports MAC, as the administrator of the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund and subscribes to the governing principles described in the MAC filing for the following reasons:

- It will unite disability organizations across the country, through a one-voice strategy called the Access 2020 Coalition, which represents the overwhelming majority of disability organizations, who in turn represent Canadians with disabilities,
- It will ensure the Accessibility Community is in control of the fund,
- It will engage, educate and stimulate collaboration and cooperation among relevant stakeholders, and;
- It will get the job done.

It is time for a fundamental shift in how we approach achieving full accessibility. We believe the approach of an independent fund controlled by the Accessibility Community and NOT broadcasters will result in higher quantity and better quality of Descriptive Video. The importance of harmonized standards for accessible content and independent studies to measure compliance, along with on-going monitoring, business models to stimulate industry growth and technology innovation will bring down the cost of accessible content.

BCE's proposal does not move us much closer to the 100%, high-quality accessible content that we are ultimately seeking. Users of accessible content must be properly funded to take a leadership role in executing a business plan to achieve 100% accessibility by 2020. We do not want to see yet another initiative controlled by the television industry that leads to people with disabilities volunteering their time to achieve nothing. After many years of such a model we have four hours of described video a week.

Therefore, CCB supports an independent fund, controlled by organizations with disabilities, not BCE. It is critical that MAC's proposal be accepted marking a fundamental shift to empowering those who have moved the accessibility agenda to where it is today. We believe the CRTC understands the importance of this as well.

This is why we are taking this step of writing to you, to ask the CRTC to lead Canada's television sector forward, by accepting MAC's, and therefore the Access 2020 Coalition's proposal and strategy for achieving a 100% accessible content day. The beauty of this strategy, in our view, is that it will work towards reducing the cost of accessible content for broadcasters – so that all broadcasters will be able to afford and offer more accessible content.

Sincerely,



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