

Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications
Commission

2023–24

REPORT ON ACCESSIBILITY

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Minister of Canadian Heritage

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From the Minister

The Canadian Heritage Portfolio, which includes the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), plays an important role in creating a barrier-free country, where every person has access to quality programs and services.

The [Accessible Canada Act](#) came into force in July 2019 and declared that all persons, regardless of their disabilities, are entitled to full and equal participation in society and that laws, policies, programs, services, and structures are to take into account the disabilities of persons. As a result, the CRTC is required to report annually on specific accessibility indicators about the industries it regulates.



The CRTC has made important advances this past year by working to make their processes and telecommunications services across Canada more accessible. For example, they ensured that next generation 9-1-1 services took into consideration the Deaf and hard of hearing community, and they enabled submissions to interventions in American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) formats, among other improvements.

As Minister of Canadian Heritage, I am pleased to present the CRTC's Report on Accessibility for 2023–24. I would like to highlight the Commission's ongoing efforts to include accessibility issues in everything it does. I hope you will enjoy reading this report.

The Honourable Pascale St-Onge

Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer’s message

I am pleased to submit the CRTC’s Report on Accessibility for 2023-24.

Over the past year, we continued to identify, prevent and remove barriers in concrete ways. For example, we worked closely with Canadians who are Deaf or hard of hearing to help ensure that Next Generation 9-1-1 services are accessible. We developed compliance reports to ensure mobile wireless service plans meet the needs of persons with disabilities. We also continued to accept submissions to our proceedings in ASL and LSQ formats.



While we are proud of the progress we have made, we know we still have more to do. As we continue our work, we encourage Canadians to notify us of any barriers they still face to participate in our processes through our [Feedback Process](#).

We are committed to continuing to work toward a fully accessible and inclusive communications system.

Vicky Eatrvides

Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has been working since the 1980s to enhance the interactions of persons with disabilities with their communications companies.

The *Accessible Canada Act* (ACA) took effect in July 2019. It amended the [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act](#) to increase accountability and transparency through an annual reporting requirement. As the regulatory body responsible for overseeing the telecommunications and broadcasting industries, the CRTC is committed to the ACA’s goal of making Canada barrier-free by 2040.

In 2023-24, the CRTC monitored communications companies to ensure improved accessibility in television programming, cellphone services and during network outages. The CRTC also continued its review of Video Relay Service.

In addition, the CRTC continued to improve the accessibility of its public consultation processes by removing barriers to participation and enabling the participation of persons with disabilities in the policy-making process consistent with the principle of “nothing about us without us” that underlies the ACA.

This year’s report contains two new areas under the *Broadcasting Act*. As of 2023-24, the CRTC must now report on:

- notices of violations against broadcasters for violating requirements related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers; and,
- notices of violations against broadcasters for violating accessibility reporting requirements.

These mirror existing areas of activity under the *Telecommunications Act* that the CRTC also reports on.

The CRTC keeps the public up to date on the specific accessibility measures it has taken for the industries it regulates. What follows are the results for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Results

Broadcasting Act and Telecommunications Act

In 2023-24, the CRTC conducted an inquiry under the *Broadcasting Act* and an inquiry under the *Telecommunications Act* related to accessibility reporting requirements, as described below.¹

Compliance with the CRTC Accessibility Reporting Regulations

The CRTC is responsible for implementing accessibility reporting rules for the broadcasting and telecommunications industries under the ACA. The [CRTC Accessibility Reporting Regulations](#) came into force in 2021 and include a requirement for service providers to establish an accessibility feedback process and to publish an accessibility plan and progress reports.

Communications companies must let the CRTC know that they have taken these steps by the following dates:

- Feedback process and description (by June 1, 2023)
- Initial accessibility plan (by June 1, 2024)
- First progress report (by June 1, 2025)
- Second progress report (by June 1, 2026)

These documents are reviewed by the CRTC, with an emphasis placed on those of the larger companies (i.e., companies with 100 or more employees), which provide service to the majority of Canadians. Any deficiencies are addressed by working directly with each company.

Broadcasting Act

In addition to the inquiry on accessibility reporting requirements, the CRTC conducted two inquiries related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers under the *Broadcasting Act*, as described below.² Since broadcasting companies were generally compliant with their accessibility obligations, no further action was necessary with respect to measures like orders or notices of violation.³

¹ Inquiries conducted under [subsection 12\(1\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#) in relation to [sections 42 to 44 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#) and Inquiries conducted under [subsection 48\(1.1\) of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to [sections 51 to 53 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).

² Inquiries conducted under [subsection 12\(1\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#).

³ The CRTC has nothing to report under these provisions: Orders made under [subsection 12\(2\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#); Orders made under [subsection 12\(2\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#) in relation to [sections 42 to 44 of the *Accessible*](#)

Television distribution and programming services

On March 7, 2024, the CRTC launched a public proceeding to consider [a complaint](#) about the accessibility of certain television distribution and programming services for persons who are blind or partially sighted.

Compliance reports on closed captioning accuracy rate for live English-language television programming

Canadians who use and rely on closed captioning to watch English-language television programming should have access to the highest possible quality of closed captioning for live programming. For English-language live captioning, broadcasters must reach an accuracy rate of at least 98%.⁴

To ensure compliance, the CRTC requires broadcasters [to report annually](#) on the accuracy of closed captioning of live English-language television programming. The CRTC also requires broadcasters to report annually on their efforts to improve the accuracy of live closed captioning.⁵ In cases of repeated non-compliance with the expected accuracy rate, the CRTC may explore imposing additional regulatory requirements.⁶

Telecommunications Act

In addition to the inquiry on accessibility reporting requirements, the CRTC conducted three inquiries related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers under the *Telecommunications Act*, as described below.⁷ Telecommunications companies were generally compliant with their accessibility obligations. For this reason, no further action was required with respect to measures like orders or notices of violation.⁸

Canada Act; Notices of Violation issued under [section 34.8 of the *Broadcasting Act*](#); Notices of Violation issued under [section 34.8 of the *Broadcasting Act*](#) in relation to any of [subsections 42\(1\) to \(4\) and \(7\)](#), [43\(1\) to \(3\) and 44\(1\) to \(3\)](#) and [\(6\)](#) of the *Accessible Canada Act*.

⁴ As measured by the method described in the Canadian NER Evaluation Guidelines.

⁵ Closed captioning is the on-screen textual representation of the audio component of an audio-visual program. It displays a text rendition of all significant audio content, including on-screen dialog and non-speech contextual information such as sound effects, what music is playing, the identity of speakers and their manner of speaking.

⁶ [The French-language closed captioning framework](#) is distinct from the English-language framework.

⁷ Inquiries conducted under [subsection 48\(1\) of the *Telecommunications Act*](#).

⁸ The CRTC had nothing to report under these provisions: Inspections conducted under [section 71 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#); Inspections conducted under [section 71 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to [sections 51 to 53 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#); Orders made under [section 51 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#); Orders made under [section 51 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to [sections 51 to 53 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#); Notices of violation issued under [section 72.005 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#); Notices of violation issued under [section 72.005 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to any of [subsections 51\(1\) to \(4\) and \(7\)](#), [52\(1\) to \(3\) and 53\(1\) to \(3\) and \(6\) of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#); Inquiries conducted under [subsection 48\(1\) of the *Telecommunications Act*](#).

Review of Video Relay Service

Video Relay Service (VRS) is a basic telecommunications service that enables people with hearing or speech disabilities who use sign language to communicate with voice telephone users. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In 2023-24, the CRTC continued its [review of VRS](#). The record of the proceeding closed in November 2023. The CRTC will issue an updated regulatory policy in English, French, ASL and LSQ.

The CRTC took steps throughout the review to enable the full participation of persons whose first language is ASL or LSQ. In 2023-24, for example, the CRTC published ASL and LSQ videos summarizing [Call for comments – Review of Video Relay Service](#).

Compliance reports filed by cellphone companies

With regulatory policy [Mobile wireless service plans that meet the needs of Canadians with various disabilities](#), the CRTC put measures in place to make it easier for persons with disabilities to find and subscribe to accessible cellphone plans that work best for them.

These measures require cellphone companies to send the CRTC a report every year about their consultations with persons with disabilities and their accessible plan offerings. The CRTC makes these reports public and welcomes feedback from persons with disabilities.

Reliability and resiliency of telecommunications networks

In 2023-24, the CRTC continued its consultation to help enhance [the resilience and reliability of Canada’s telecommunications networks](#). Telecommunications service outages, caused by a variety of factors, including extreme weather, cyber-attacks, and accidents, disrupt the lives of Canadians by affecting telephone and Internet access.

The CRTC invited Canadians to comment on notification and reporting requirements for major service outages. The CRTC asked whether:

- Notifications should include information on the number of customers with disabilities who use accessibility services affected by outages; and
- Reports should include information on the impact of outages on accessibility services for persons with disabilities.

The CRTC took steps to account for the perspectives of Canadians who are Deaf or hard of hearing in the public consultation by:

- Publishing the following key information in ASL and LSQ in video format on the CRTC’s website:
 - [a summary of Telecom Notice of Consultation 2023-39](#);

- [paragraph 24 of Telecom Notice of Consultation 2023-39](#), which contains all of the questions on which the CRTC called for comments;
 - [the procedure for ASL and LSQ video intervention submissions](#); and,
 - [the deadline for the submission of reply comments](#) by all interveners to the ASL and LSQ video interventions.
- Enabling comments for these consultations to be submitted in ASL or LSQ video format; and
 - Amending the procedure to allow for the submission of reply comments by all interveners to the ASL and LSQ video comments received.

Observations

Canada's broadcasting system should provide programming that is accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities.

Public consultation for described video and audio description

Described video and audio description enable persons who are blind or partially sighted to have full access to visual content. In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the CRTC [announced](#) that it would be launching a public consultation on described video and audio description that enables viewers who are blind or partially sighted to equitably access programming, regardless of the platform on which it is offered.⁹ The public consultation [launched](#) in June 2024.

Public consultation for closed captioning

Closed captioning enables persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing to have full access to audio-visual content. In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the CRTC [announced](#) that it would be launching a public consultation to develop a regulatory policy for closed captioning that enables persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing to equitably access programming, regardless of the platform on which it is offered. The public consultation [launched](#) in June 2024.

Implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1

The CRTC is helping to foster universal access to 9-1-1 networks and services of highest quality for all Canadians. The CRTC is currently overseeing [the implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1 \(NG9-1-1\)](#). NG9-1-1 will provide access to new emergency

⁹ Described video is the narration added to the soundtrack of a program to describe important visual details that cannot be understood from the main soundtrack alone. Audio description, which is used during news and information programming, relies on a program host or announcer to provide a voice-over by reading aloud or describing key elements of programming, such as text and graphics that appear on the screen.

services and tools that will help enhance the safety of all Canadians, including persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing, as well as individuals with speech disabilities.

Appendix

Results

Broadcasting Act

Measure	Number of Incidences
Proceedings related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers ¹⁰	2
Proceedings related to accessibility reporting requirements ¹¹	1
Orders related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers ¹²	nil
Orders related to accessibility reporting requirements ¹³	nil
Notices issued for violating requirements related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers ¹⁴	nil
Notices issued for violating accessibility reporting requirements ¹⁵	nil

Telecommunications Act

Measure	Number of Incidences
Inspections to ensure compliance with requirements related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers ¹⁶	nil
Inspections related to accessibility reporting requirements ¹⁷	nil

¹⁰ Inquiries conducted under [subsection 12\(1\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#).

¹¹ Inquiries conducted under [subsection 12\(1\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#) in relation to [sections 42 to 44 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).

¹² Orders made under [subsection 12\(2\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#).

¹³ Orders made under [subsection 12\(2\) of the *Broadcasting Act*](#) in relation to [sections 42 to 44 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).

¹⁴ Notices of Violation issued under [section 34.8 of the *Broadcasting Act*](#).

¹⁵ Notices of Violation issued under [section 34.8 of the *Broadcasting Act*](#) in relation to any of [subsections 42\(1\) to \(4\) and \(7\), 43\(1\) to \(3\) and 44\(1\) to \(3\) and \(6\) of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).

¹⁶ Inspections conducted under [section 71 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#).

¹⁷ Inspections conducted under [section 71 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to [sections 51 to 53 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).

Orders related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers ¹⁸	nil
Orders related to accessibility reporting requirements ¹⁹	nil
Notices issued for violating requirements related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers ²⁰	nil
Notices issued for violating accessibility reporting requirements ²¹	nil
Proceedings related to identifying, preventing and removing barriers ²²	3
Proceedings related to accessibility reporting requirements ²³	1

¹⁸ Orders made under [section 51 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#).

¹⁹ Orders made under [section 51 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to [sections 51 to 53 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).

²⁰ Notices of violation issued under [section 72.005 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#).

²¹ Notices of violation issued under [section 72.005 of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to any of [subsections 51\(1\) to \(4\) and \(7\), 52\(1\) to \(3\) and 53\(1\) to \(3\) and \(6\) of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).

²² Inquiries conducted under [subsection 48\(1\) of the *Telecommunications Act*](#).

²³ Inquiries conducted under [subsection 48\(1.1\) of the *Telecommunications Act*](#) in relation to [sections 51 to 53 of the *Accessible Canada Act*](#).