



# Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2025-344

PDF version

References: 2024-138 and 2024-138-1

Gatineau, 17 December 2025

*Public record: 1011-NOC2024-0138*

## Regulatory Policy for Described Video and Audio Description

### 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, notably through described video services for persons who are blind or partially sighted.

Described video and audio description allow persons who are blind or partially sighted to have access to different parts of the visual content of programming. Described video provides a narration of important visual details and information about actions, characters, scene changes, and on-screen text. Audio description provides a voice-over description of key elements such as text and graphics that appear on screen during information programming, including news.

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 described video and audio description of programs provided by traditional and online streaming services.

Based on the public record, the Commission has determined that online streaming services and on-demand services must provide described video on all new scripted pre-recorded original programs. These services are also expected to include described video in any new third-party programs and on any partially scripted live events of national interest. All original productions of information-based programs must include audio description.

To further facilitate access, online streaming services and on-demand services must also offer a search feature to find described programming.

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 **3 February 2026** and may submit a reply to any comments received by no later than **13 February 2026**.

## Introduction

1. On 27 April 2023, the *Online Streaming Act* came into effect.<sup>1</sup> This act 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. 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, described video services available to assist persons who are blind or partially sighted.
2. Described video is a means to help inform persons who are blind or partially sighted about visual content. It provides a narration to describe important visual details and information about actions, characters, scene changes, and on-screen text that cannot be understood from the main soundtrack alone. Described video supplements the main soundtrack of a program and is usually added during existing pauses in dialogue.
3. Audio description is used for information programs, including news programming.<sup>2</sup> It relies on a program host or announcer to provide a voice-over description of key elements of a program, such as text and graphics that appear on-screen.
4. For persons who are blind or partially sighted, described video and audio description are important means of making audio-visual programs accessible. The Commission's existing rules for described video and audio description of traditional television programs reflect this importance. These same sources of information and entertainment are increasingly available online across a variety of platforms.
5. In Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2024-138 (the Notice), the Commission sought comments on the development of a regulatory policy for described video and audio description of audio-visual programs provided by online streaming undertakings and licensed on-demand services operating in Canada.<sup>3</sup> The objective of the proceeding was to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessing online programming for persons who are blind or partially sighted.

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

<sup>2</sup> In the United States, the term “audio description” is used differently. In that jurisdiction, the term refers to the technique called “described video” in Canada. In this regulatory policy, the term “audio description” carries the Canadian meaning.

<sup>3</sup> This regulatory policy applies only to programs in which the original language is either English or French; it does not apply to translations of these programs into another language, 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. This regulatory policy intends that described video be applied in the original language of the program.

## Record of the proceeding

6. The Commission made the decisions set out in the present regulatory policy based on the record of this proceeding.<sup>4</sup> The record includes comments from individual Canadians, including persons who are blind or partially sighted, accessibility groups, consumer advocacy groups, industry and broadcasting organizations, online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, and traditional broadcasters. The record also includes online streaming undertakings' and on-demand services' responses to two 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:
  - extended timeframes for the intervention and reply periods were provided from the outset; and
  - a proactive extension was granted to the intervention and reply deadlines to provide all interested persons with sufficient time to prepare their submissions.<sup>5</sup>
8. The public record for this proceeding can be found on the Commission's public proceedings webpage.

## Interventions

9. The Commission received 50 interventions and 12 replies in response to the Notice from online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, traditional broadcasters, associations representing broadcasters, accessibility advocacy 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 policy using its authority under the Act<sup>6</sup> and in accordance with the *Order Issuing Directions to the CRTC (Sustainable and Equitable Broadcasting Regulatory Framework)* (the Policy Direction).<sup>7</sup> 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.

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

<sup>5</sup> See Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2024-138-1.

<sup>6</sup> S.C. 1991, c.11.

<sup>7</sup> SOR/2023-239, 9 November 2023.

## 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 and on-demand services;
- types of programs to be video described:
  - i. new original programming,
  - ii. new third-party programming and legacy programming,
  - iii. advertisements and promotional programs;
- types of programs to be audio described;
- limited prime time exception for traditional television;
- quality standards – described video;
- user experience:
  - i. enhancing usability – described video,
  - ii. complaints process,
  - iii. consultations with blind and partially sighted communities,
  - 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 and on-demand services**

13. The Commission sought comments on which online streaming undertakings should be subject to requirements on described video and audio description.

14. Most parties agreed that the requirements should apply to all online undertakings covered by the [\*Online Undertakings Registration Regulations\*](#) (the Registration Regulations). The Commission considers that the use of the Registration Regulations criteria ensures 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, maximizes the benefit of these important accessibility measures for as many Canadians as possible.

15. Traditional broadcasters' online platforms<sup>8</sup> that are registered under the Registration Regulations are considered online streaming undertakings for the purposes of this regulatory policy.
16. 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.
17. Historically, the Commission considered on-demand services as an extension of traditional broadcasting services. While on-demand services did not have specific obligations, they were expected to follow practices similar to those of traditional television. However, based on the record, the Commission is of the view that, going forward, on-demand services and online streaming undertakings should have similar requirements.
18. Much like online streaming undertakings, on-demand services offer extensive libraries of both original<sup>9</sup> and third-party programming where most programming can be selected and consumed at any time. Given these similarities and considering that on-demand services and online streaming undertakings face many of the same challenges in offering described video, as outlined later in this regulatory policy, the Commission considers that online streaming undertakings and on-demand services should be subject to the same requirements for described video.
19. Some on-demand services submitted that, due to financial constraints, community programming undertakings would be unable to provide described video for their programs and that requirements should not apply when community programming is broadcast by online undertakings or on-demand services. They submitted that they would no longer be able to broadcast community programs on those services if they were subject to a described video requirement.
20. The Commission notes that linear community programming undertakings are not subject to a described video requirement. Consequently, the Commission considers it appropriate to exempt community programming from described video requirements when broadcast by online streaming undertakings or on-demand services.
21. With regards to online services, consistent with the Notice, this proceeding addresses only online streaming undertakings, which the Commission has considered distinct

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<sup>8</sup> Traditional broadcasters' online platforms allow subscribers to access their programming online via computers, mobile devices, etc.

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this regulatory policy, an original program (whether pre-recorded or live) is one that is created or commissioned by an online streaming undertaking or on-demand service and made available on its own platform, and includes programs created or commissioned by an entity related to the online streaming undertaking or on-demand service.

from online unique transaction services such as one-time rental or purchase of an individual program transmitted or retransmitted over the Internet.<sup>10</sup>

22. Finally, consistent with the Act and the Policy Direction, this regulatory policy does not apply to programs that are primarily intended for online distribution as user-uploaded programs through social media services.
23. In light of the above, the Commission requires licensed on-demand services (on-demand services) and online streaming undertakings that must register under the Registration Regulations to be subject to this regulatory policy and its related conditions of service on described video and audio description. The conditions of service are set out in Appendix 2 to this regulatory policy. Further, the Commission exempts community programming hosted by online streaming undertakings and on-demand services from described video requirements.

### **Types of programs to be video described**

24. The Commission notes that although its described video requirements for traditional broadcasters apply only to certain program categories, online streaming undertakings do not categorize programs in the same way.<sup>11</sup>
25. Based on the record, the Commission determines that, rather than requiring online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to adopt the program categories used by traditional broadcasters, the following three types of programs will be used for the purpose of this regulatory policy:
  - New original programs: programs created or commissioned by an online streaming undertaking or on-demand service and made available on its platform;
  - New third-party programs: programs created by a third party and made available by an online streaming undertaking or on-demand service;<sup>12</sup> and
  - Legacy programs: older programs<sup>13</sup> originally created by online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, or by a third party and made available by an online streaming undertaking or on-demand service.

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<sup>10</sup> See Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329 and Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2024-65.

<sup>11</sup> 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.”

<sup>12</sup> New programs are those created or commissioned after the orders from this regulatory policy come into effect on **17 December 2027**.

<sup>13</sup> Programs created or commissioned before the orders from this regulatory policy come into effect on **17 December 2027**.

26. With respect to specific genres of programming that fall within these three types, most parties submitted that described video is best suited for scripted pre-recorded programs with sufficient pauses in dialogue for the program to be described.
27. Some parties also argued that expanding described video to all live event or news programs would be difficult and cost prohibitive since there is a shortage of live description providers and expertise in Canada.
28. However, the Commission considers that the record shows that partially scripted live events of national interest, such as the Academy Awards or the Olympic Opening Ceremony, can be described successfully.
29. The Commission acknowledges that reality programs, including talent and competition programs, can be more challenging to describe than scripted programs due to their unpredictable nature and because providers typically receive them less than 24 hours before they are made available to audiences. The Commission considered these challenges when it developed the described video exception for traditional broadcasters, which is detailed below in the section entitled “Limited prime time exception for traditional television.”
30. Scripted pre-recorded programs and partially scripted live events of national interest will be classified within the three program types described above: new original programs, new third-party programs, and legacy programs.
31. In light of the above, this regulatory policy applies only to the genres of scripted pre-recorded programs and partially scripted live events of national interest.
32. This regulatory policy applies only to English- and French-language programs within the three program types, an approach that is consistent with how described video obligations are imposed on traditional Canadian broadcasters.

### ***New original programs***

33. Accessibility groups and individual Canadians who intervened in this proceeding generally submitted that all programs offered by online streaming undertakings and on-demand services should include described video.
34. The Commission notes that online streaming undertakings typically make described video available on their new scripted pre-recorded original programs.
35. The Commission considers that a requirement for online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to include described video for all new scripted pre-recorded original programs would result in a gradual but significant increase in the amount of described video in their program libraries.
36. The Commission considers that a requirement for online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to describe all new scripted pre-recorded original programs would be consistent with the current requirement for traditional broadcasters to

provide described video during prime time, when new programming is typically aired. The Commission notes that this would not include talent or reality programming.

37. In light of the above, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to provide described video for all new scripted pre-recorded original programs that they make available to audiences. As the record demonstrates that these types of programs can be described successfully, the Commission also expects online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to provide described video for partially scripted live events of national interest that they make available to audiences.

***Legacy and third-party programs***

38. Many accessibility groups and individual Canadians stated a preference for described video to be created during the production process, not as a post-production add-on.
39. Many online streaming undertakings and on-demand services submitted that they find it challenging to include described video on third-party programs. They stated that the third-party programs they receive come with described video only approximately 10% of the time. Moreover, they noted that they are dependent on the third party to either provide described video or grant the rights needed to create it, which not all third parties are willing to do. They further stated that in cases where described video can be added, its quality cannot be guaranteed since they lack control over essential elements of the program, such as the length of pauses between dialogue.
40. Many online streaming undertakings and on-demand services also stated that they find it challenging to describe their legacy programs due to the sheer volume of their catalogues, which in some cases span decades and include thousands of hours of programs, most of which are third-party. For these reasons, they submitted, they cannot guarantee the quality or quantity of described video for third-party or legacy programs.
41. Many of these interveners submitted that the imposition of a quota for described video across entire program catalogues could result in the reduction of legacy programs offered in Canada.
42. The Commission considers it important to differentiate between programs that online streaming undertakings and on-demand services themselves create or commission and programs that they only distribute. Moreover, it is not clear, based on the record, that there would be sufficient described video resources to meet the demand that would result from a requirement to describe all third-party and legacy programs. Given the volume of programs and the potential strain on described video resources, such a requirement could result in an inconsistent quality across the described video produced.
43. While the Commission acknowledges the concerns expressed by online streaming undertakings and on-demand services, the Commission nonetheless expects them to

work toward an increase in the amount of described video available in their catalogues.

44. In light of the above, the Commission finds it appropriate to:

- expect online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to provide described video for all new scripted pre-recorded third-party programs;
- encourage online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to describe scripted pre-recorded legacy programs, where possible;
- expect that the number of scripted pre-recorded legacy programs with described video will increase each year; and
- encourage online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to focus on describing the most popular legacy programs.

45. The measures outlined above are intended to decrease barriers to access to content without straining described video resources and to ensure continued access both to the diversity of programs available from online streaming undertakings and on-demand services and to described video of consistent quality.

#### ***Advertisements and promotional programs***

46. Many online streaming undertakings and on-demand services submitted that advertisements (i.e., trailers or advertisements for full-length programs) and promotional programs (i.e., excerpts of full-length programs, shorts, and bonus programs) should not be subject to any new described video requirements. They stated that some of these programs are too short and do not have enough pauses in the dialogue to accommodate described video.

47. The Commission considers that exempting advertisements and promotional programs from the described video requirements would be consistent with its rules for traditional broadcasters.

48. In light of the above, the Commission will exempt advertisements and promotional programs from described video requirements for online streaming undertakings and on-demand services.

#### **Types of programs to be audio described**

49. Accessibility groups and individual Canadians who intervened in this proceeding generally stated that all news and information programs should include audio description.

50. Online streaming undertakings and on-demand services submitted that since audio description cannot be added after the fact, any obligations related to its provision should apply only to their own original programs, and not to third-party programs.

51. The Commission notes that traditional broadcasters are currently required to provide audio description for all news and information programs produced in-house.
52. The Commission further notes that all community programming undertakings, including those that are independent or operated by a licensed Canadian broadcasting distribution undertaking (BDU), are already required to audio describe any news and information programs that they broadcast.<sup>14</sup> In Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2016-224, the Commission further encouraged BDUs to make their community programming available on all platforms, including online to all Canadians, free of charge. Any community programming broadcast on these platforms would also include its original audio description, as it is built directly into the program.
53. Therefore, any news and information programs from a community programming undertaking that is made available by an online streaming undertaking or on-demand service would be audio described by default.
54. As noted above, unlike described video, audio description relies on a program host or announcer to provide a voice-over by reading aloud or describing key visual elements of news and information programs.
55. The Commission acknowledges that, due to the nature of audio description, online streaming undertakings and on-demand services would not be able to add audio description to programs received from a third party. As such, the Commission finds it reasonable to exclude third-party programs from the audio description obligation.
56. However, as noted above, the news and information programs provided by community programming undertakings, which in some cases could be considered programs from a third party, would already have audio description by default.
57. The Commission will therefore require online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to provide audio description for all new original news and information programs that they make available to audiences.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Limited prime time exception for traditional television**

58. The Commission notes that traditional broadcasters are required to provide described video on non-scripted reality programs. These types of programs are often delivered without described video from the United States (US) less than 24 hours before broadcast. In those instances, the Commission allows for an exception to the described video requirement for the original airing of the program and requires such programs to be broadcast with described video for any repeat airing scheduled greater than 24 hours from delivery.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2016-224.

<sup>15</sup> As is the case with traditional broadcasters, audio description requirements apply to information programming, including news, but do not apply to sporting events.

<sup>16</sup> See Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2019-392.

59. The Notice sought comments on whether this exception remains appropriate.
60. Traditional broadcasters submitted that the exception remains necessary since they continue to receive prime-time programs without described video from the US less than 24 hours prior to airtime. These traditional broadcasters submitted that they remain unable to provide described video within a 24-hour timeframe following receipt of the programs, and they argued that without the exception they would be unable to air these programs during prime time or would be in non-compliance with their described video requirements.
61. While many accessibility groups who intervened in this proceeding wished for all programs to be video described, most of these groups also acknowledged that the exception will remain pertinent until such a time that the programs are provided with described video.
62. In light of the above, the Commission considers it appropriate to maintain the exception to described video requirements for prime-time programs that traditional broadcasters receive from the US without described video less than 24 hours prior to air. The Commission also maintains the requirement that any repeat airings of such programs scheduled more than 24 hours from delivery be broadcast with described video.
63. In order to properly assess compliance with this exception, the Commission will require broadcasters to report annually on what programs were aired without described video during prime time, and for what reason. This requirement is detailed below in the section titled “Implementation and reporting.”

## **User experience**

### ***Search feature***

64. In their interventions, accessibility groups and individual Canadians asked for various measures to increase the usability of described video, including a requirement for online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to have a search feature for programs with described video.
65. The Commission notes that while programs with described video are typically marked with a described video logo, it appears that only a few online streaming undertakings and on-demand services provide a search feature to find programs with described video. Users are therefore required to search through the entire program catalogue to find programs with described video.
66. The Commission is of the view that it is important for persons who are blind or partially sighted to have an easy and accessible way to find described programs. The Commission considers that users should not have to manually search an entire program catalogue to find accessible programs.

67. Most online streaming undertakings and on-demand services stated that they would be able to add a search feature and aimed to do so by the end of 2025.
68. In light of the above, the Commission will require online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to provide an accessible search feature to find programs with described video.

### ***Complaints process***

69. In their interventions, many accessibility groups, individual Canadians, and online streaming undertakings stated that online streaming undertakings should have the opportunity to address complaints before they are escalated to the Commission.
70. The Commission notes that most, if not all, online streaming undertakings already have a complaints mechanism in place.
71. Many online streaming undertakings also submitted that the accessibility feedback mechanisms required under the *Accessible Canada Act* are sufficient to address consumers' concerns related to described video and audio description.
72. At this time, the practice in place for traditional broadcasters and on-demand services 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.
73. 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.
74. 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.

### ***Consultations with blind and partially sighted communities***

75. Many accessibility groups stated that online streaming undertakings should be required to maintain an open dialogue with blind and partially sighted communities and hold consultations every one-to-two years in order to ensure they are kept up to date on that community's needs.
76. Many online streaming undertakings and on-demand services submitted that they regularly consult with persons with disabilities and submitted examples of their recent consultations with described video users. 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 described video users on a regular basis could lead to consultation fatigue.

77. Some online streaming undertakings also expressed concerns about the administrative burden of additional consultations.
78. The Commission considers that gathering input directly from those who rely on described video and audio description would support the meaningful implementation of this regulatory policy, and that online streaming undertakings should consult specifically on described video and audio description, and not just on accessibility in general. The Commission notes that consultations related to described video and audio description can be done in conjunction with the consultations required under the *Accessible Canada Act*.
79. In light of the above, the Commission expects online streaming undertakings and on-demand services (either collectively or individually) to consult, on an annual basis, individuals and groups in blind and partially sighted communities about described video and audio description policies and practices.

#### **Quality standards**

80. With respect to quality standards, accessibility groups requested that the Commission develop an industry-wide quality standard, using Accessible Media Inc.'s (AMI) existing [quality standards](#) as a starting point. AMI agreed with this point, but it further stated that, unlike with closed captioning, whose quality depends on accuracy, described video is not an exercise in accuracy but rather a creative process.
81. In response, most online streaming undertakings stated that quality standards and best practices for described video are best left to each service provider, and explained that many service providers have already created their own versions of these standards. They further stated that quality standards are always evolving, and that they themselves are best positioned to define their own creative process for described video. They did, however, express a willingness to work together with blind and partially sighted communities.
82. Most on-demand services submitted that they follow AMI's quality standards.
83. The Commission considers that online streaming undertakings and on-demand services do not operate under a single set of market circumstances or business models, and that each already has its own independent approach to creating described programs.
84. The Commission notes that some online streaming undertakings have been recognized for providing high quality described video.
85. The Commission therefore considers that uniform quality standards should not be imposed at this time. Rather, the Commission will impose a reporting requirement on online streaming undertakings and on-demand services to submit, on an annual basis,

a copy of the described video quality standards they follow. This reporting requirement is detailed below in the section entitled “Implementation and reporting.”

86. As noted above, AMI has developed best practices for described video, which many on-demand services follow. The Commission supports AMI’s efforts in this regard. If online streaming undertakings or on-demand services do not wish to develop their own standards, they could adopt AMI’s best practices.
87. In light of the above, the Commission encourages online streaming undertakings and on-demand services without internal described video quality standards to follow [AMI](#)’s best practices.

### ***Assessing the need for a working group***

88. In their interventions, some accessibility groups called for the development of a working group on the provision of described video.
89. Many online streaming undertakings and on-demand services, however, were against the development of a described video working group, citing a preference for customized solutions over a common approach. They stated that they would prefer to focus their internal accessibility resources on resolving customer issues. They also argued that working group members would be operating under different market conditions and have different capacities with respect to the provision of described video.
90. The Commission considers that most parties already have their own internal mechanisms for creating described video, establishing quality standards, consulting with described video users, and resolving complaints.
91. Moreover, despite the Commission’s follow-up questions on the proposed structure of a described video 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.
92. The Commission considers that the reporting requirements imposed on online streaming undertakings and on-demand services will enable the Commission to monitor their progress with respect to described video and audio description.
93. 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***

94. Most parties agreed that it would take time to roll out any described video framework and generally agreed on a two-to-three-year timeframe for implementation.

95. This regulatory policy and the conditions of service it proposes for online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, and television services will come into effect **17 December 2027**.
96. 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 and on-demand services to file with the Commission the following two implementation reports:
- implementation strategies for the new regulatory policy for described video and audio description by **17 September 2026**; and
  - confirmation of implementation of the new regulatory policy for described video and audio description by **17 December 2027**.

### ***Annual reports***

97. The Commission considers that, for transparency and monitoring purposes, online streaming undertakings and on-demand services should report annually to the Commission on their activities. Following the initial implementation reports, online streaming undertakings and on-demand services will have an annual reporting requirement starting in 2028. The annual described video and audio description reports will be due on 30 November of each year and will cover the period of 1 September to 31 August. The first report is to be filed on 30 November 2028, covering 1 September 2027 to 31 August 2028. The Commission acknowledges that this reporting requirement is creating some regulatory burden; however, the Commission has striven to minimize the impact of this reporting while still enabling both 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.
98. Each online streaming undertaking's annual reports must include:
- the described video quality standards they follow; and
  - the number of:
    - new scripted pre-recorded original programs available with described video;
    - new scripted pre-recorded third-party programs available with described video, and new scripted pre-recorded third-party programs received without described video and to which described video was added;
    - scripted pre-recorded legacy programs available with described video and the change year over year; and
    - complaints they have received about described video and audio description.

99. In order to properly assess compliance with the prime time exception, the Commission will require traditional broadcasters to report to the Commission annually on the amount of programming aired during prime time that did not include described video as a result of the exception to provide described video for prime-time programming received from the US less than 24 hours prior to air.

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

## **Conclusion**

101. 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 blind or partially sighted have access to programs that are accessible without barriers, regardless of whether they are accessing programs online or through traditional television services.

102. This regulatory policy aims to ensure that barriers to accessing programs are identified, removed, and prevented for persons who are blind or partially sighted, regardless of the platform.

## **The proposed orders imposing conditions of service**

103. As noted above, the Commission determined that the regulatory policy for described video and audio description will apply to all audio-visual online streaming undertakings that have to register under the Registration Regulations and to licensed on-demand services.<sup>17</sup>

104. The Commission is proposing to make orders under subsection 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, on-demand services, and traditional broadcasters, as applicable.<sup>18</sup>

105. 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.

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<sup>17</sup> The existing obligations for traditional broadcasters continue to apply, and the limited exception for certain prime time programming will continue to apply as discussed above.

<sup>18</sup> 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, on-demand services, and traditional broadcasters. Subsection 9.1(4) requires that the Commission publish the orders that it proposes to make on its website and give a reasonable opportunity for comment.

106. Interested persons may file comments on the proposed orders by no later than **3 February 2026** and may submit a reply to any comments received by no later than **13 February 2026**. If there are no comments, the orders will be finalized and imposed as proposed.

107. The specifics of the proposed orders are set out in Appendix 2 to this regulatory policy.

Secretary General

### **Related documents**

- *Call for comments – Development of a regulatory policy for described video and audio description*, Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-138, 25 June 2024, modified by Broadcasting Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-138-1, 19 September 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
- *Amendment proposed by Bell Media Inc., Corus Entertainment Inc. and Rogers Media Inc. to their condition of licence that requires prime time programming to be broadcast with described video*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2019-392, 3 December 2019
- *Policy framework for local and community television*, Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-224, 15 June 2016

# Appendix 1 to Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2025-344

## Legal framework

1. On 27 April 2023, the *Online Streaming Act* came into effect.<sup>1</sup> 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, described video services to assist persons who are blind or partially sighted.
2. On 22 November 2023, the Government of Canada published *Order Issuing Directions to the CRTC (Sustainable and Equitable Broadcasting Regulatory Framework)* (the Policy Direction),<sup>2</sup> 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 described video and audio description policies and obligations to additional categories 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.<sup>3</sup> The Commission considers that the requirements, expectations, and encouragements in the regulatory policy strike an effective balance between offering flexibility to online streaming undertakings and on-demand services where appropriate and removing barriers to access wherever possible by:
  - creating different rules based on the type of program (e.g., scripted, pre-recorded, live, legacy, promotional content);
  - 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
  - refraining from being overly prescriptive in terms of what describing technologies and standards are used.

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

<sup>2</sup> SOR/2023-239, 22 November 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 5(2)(e.1) of the Act.

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 blind or partially sighted, outlined in the previous section, and the resulting regulatory policy, align with these principles.

## **Appendix 2 to Broadcasting Regulatory Policy CRTC 2025-344**

### **Proposed orders imposing conditions of service for audio-visual online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, and television services**

Pursuant to subsection 9.1(1) and 9.1(4) of the *Broadcasting Act*, the Commission proposes to make orders imposing the following conditions on the carrying on of certain audio-visual online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, and television services, as applicable.

The orders come into effect on **17 December 2027**, unless otherwise specified in this order.

#### **Interpretation**

The following definitions apply in this order:

“New original programs” are programs<sup>1</sup> created or commissioned by an online streaming undertaking or an on-demand service, and made available on its own platform, and includes programs created or commissioned by an entity related to the online streaming undertaking or on-demand service.

“New third-party programs” are programs<sup>2</sup> created or commissioned by a third party and made available by an online streaming undertaking or on-demand service on its platform.

“Legacy programs” are older programs<sup>3</sup> originally created or commissioned by online streaming undertakings, on-demand services, or a third party and made available by an online streaming undertaking or on-demand service on its platform.

#### **Conditions of service for audio-visual online streaming undertakings and on-demand services**

##### **Application**

The proposed conditions of service set out below apply to the operators carrying on audio-visual online streaming undertakings that must register pursuant to the *Online Undertakings Registration Regulations*<sup>4</sup> and licensed on-demand services. The proposed conditions do not apply in respect to the unique transaction services of these online undertakings.

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<sup>1</sup> Programs created or commissioned after the orders from this regulatory policy come into effect on **17 December 2027**.

<sup>2</sup> Programs created or commissioned after the orders from this regulatory policy come into effect on **17 December 2027**.

<sup>3</sup> Programs created or commissioned before the orders from this regulatory policy come into effect on **17 December 2027**.

<sup>4</sup> SOR/2023-203 and Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2023-329.

1. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings and on-demand services shall provide described video for all English- and French-language new scripted pre-recorded original programs that they make available on their platforms.
2. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings and on-demand services shall provide audio description for all English- and French-language new original news and information programs that they make available on their platforms.
3. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings and on-demand services shall provide an accessible search feature to find programs with described video.
4. Audio-visual online streaming undertakings and on-demand services shall submit a report to the Commission detailing the following:
  - a. implementation strategies for the new regulatory policy for described video and audio description by **17 September 2026**; and
  - b. confirmation of implementation of the new regulatory policy for described video and audio description by **17 December 2027**.
5. Beginning in 2028, audio-visual online streaming undertakings and on-demand services shall submit a report by 30 November of each year that details, for the 12-month period ending on the previous 31 August:
  - a. the described video quality standards they follow; and
  - b. the number of:
    - i. English- and French-language new scripted pre-recorded original programs available with described video;
    - ii. English- and French-language new scripted pre-recorded third-party programs available with described video;
    - iii. English- and French-language new scripted pre-recorded third-party programs received without described video and to which described video was added;
    - iv. English- and French-language scripted pre-recorded legacy programs available with described video and the change year over year; and
    - v. complaints they have received about described video and audio description.

## **Condition of service for television services**

### **Application**

The proposed condition of service set out below applies to the licensees of television stations and discretionary services (referred to herein as “television services”).

1. All licensed television services shall submit a report by 30 November of each year that details, for the 12-month period ending on the previous 31 August, the number of programs aired during prime time (i.e., from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.) that did not include described video as a result of the exception to provide described video for prime-time programming received from the United States less than 24 hours prior to air, set out in Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2019-392.