

Nov. 16, 2011

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

Re: MAC and the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund.

Dear Mr. Traversy;

Over the past eight years a team of researchers at Ryerson University has been studying and evaluating accessible content production for digital broadcasting. Unlike analogue broadcasting, accessibility in a digital signal provides significant opportunities to enhance the quality of closed captioning and descriptive video allowing sub-channel distribution, new revenue models, decreased cost and increased quality.

We use a universal design approach in our research in which accessibility is considered by the creative and production teams at the beginning of production rather than tacked on as an afterthought as it has been to date. We have also been engaged in extensive technological development as well as extensive user studies involving qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate the impact of those technologies on audiences with disabilities. Our work has been extensively published in academic and professional publications and sites. In addition, we continue to pursue research and development efforts in this area.

It is our view that independent administration of the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund is essential to allow for seamless implementation of our research and future research efforts carried out by independent and public institutions. In our view an organization such as MAC that has no commercial or private sector interests or investment should be selected to ensure academic institutions from across the country have the same opportunity to design, develop and research projects to remove barriers for accessible content in a rapidly changing content distribution environment.

The strategy proposed by Media Access Canada, and which we endorse, is to engage relevant stakeholders at the committee level, allowing them to develop, vet and recommend projects for funding. Board members will be appointed by voting members of the Access 2020 Coalition. We are non-voting members of the Access 2020 Coalition, have supported MAC in its effort to create this fund and we strongly endorse them to administer it.

We therefore ask that you grant the recommendations made in MAC's response to BNOC 2011-523. Thank you for your time and consideration of our request. If you have further questions or require additional information, please contact me at dfels@ryerson.ca or 416.979.5000 ext. 7619.

Yours truly



Deborah Fels, PhD, P.Eng.

Professor, Ted Rogers School of Information Technology Management & Director, Centre for Learning Technologies, Ryerson University