



November 15, 2004

Mr. Glenn O'Farrell
President and CEO
Canadian Association of Broadcasters
350 Sparks St., Suite 306
P.O. Box 627, Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5S2

Fax: 613-233-6961

Re: CAB Action Plan to examine issues concerning the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming, as per PN CRTC 2004-2

Dear Mr. O'Farrell:

Thank you for your filing of 16 August 2004 with respect to the above noted public notice.

As stated in Public Notice 2004-2, the Commission considers the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities to be an important matter, in need of thorough investigation by the broadcasting industry. The Commission considers this Action Plan to be a critical first step towards responding to this need.

In particular, the Commission is encouraged by the preliminary research and consultations with expert organizations that were undertaken by the CAB in the preparation of its plan. The Commission places considerable importance on consultations with communities themselves in the development of relevant and workable solutions to the challenges they face with respect to inclusion in the broadcasting system. The wealth of information provided in the Action Plan regarding the challenges persons with disabilities face in society in general and in broadcasting specifically attests to the value of a consultation and research based approach to this process.

The Commission is satisfied that the CAB's proposed strategy going forward (comprehensive consultations, focus groups, best practices research) will help to ensure the development of industry expertise and will foster solid relationships with disability communities – two pre-requisites for the development of workable solutions.

While the Commission understands that the deliverables proposed in the Action Plan are examples of what could result from the research phase of the CAB's work, the Commission would like to emphasize the value of proposed deliverables such as educational tools for both broadcasters and persons with disabilities, the development of a multi-faceted recruitment strategy, and the development of a concrete portrayal strategy. These three areas are key to improving the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming. The Commission expects that the research phase will lead to the development of additional comprehensive solutions, beyond those highlighted in the Action Plan.

The Commission also notes the creation of a Joint Social Issues Committee (JSIC) Steering Committee consisting of "a relatively small group of senior executives from the broadcasting industry who will oversee the implementation of the CAB's Action Plan" and an Outreach Committee consisting of "representatives from the independent production sector, industry guilds and/or trade associations, representatives from national disability organizations and others with expertise in issues related to disability and the media" to "serve as an ongoing advisory group". In the creation of these committees, the Commission encourages the CAB to do its utmost to ensure that persons with disabilities have membership on both committees.

The Commission expects the CAB to adhere to the deadlines proposed in its Action Plan. In particular, the Commission expects to receive a report from the CAB in July 2005 on its research and consultation processes, as proposed. Finally, the Commission expects that the CAB will also provide an implementation plan at that time, setting out which initiatives or deliverables will be undertaken.

Please contact Jane Britten, Senior Policy Analyst, Social Issues, Discretionary Services and Social Policy at (819) 997-4276 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

'Original signed by Diane Rhéaume'

Diane Rhéaume
Secretary General