



**Canadian Association
Of Broadcasters**

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**Report on
Diversity in Broadcasting**

Appendix D

Column in Trade Publications



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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

A Plan to Move Forward on Greater Inclusion



CANADA'S private broadcasters are committed to continuing to bring greater diversity to Canada's broadcasting system, both onscreen and behind the scenes. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) has completed a research study and developed recommendations, and is committed to improving the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming (<http://www.cab-acr.ca>).

Over the past 18 months, I had the privilege to chair a Steering Committee comprised of Canadian private broadcasters, created to oversee three streams of work: comprehensive consultations; focus group research; and best practices research. The Committee also oversaw the development of a toolkit for broadcasters to assist them in meeting commitments to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities in the industry, and address presence and portrayal issues onscreen. This study was the first of its kind in Canada.

An Outreach Committee comprised of persons with disabilities, many of whom have experience with the broadcasting industry, was also created to serve as an advisory group on the implementation of the CAB research plan and provided invaluable input and guidance on the recommendations and tools identified. The research study included three components: 1) **Extensive consultations:** Through one-on-one interviews with representatives from service and consumer disability non-government organizations (disability NGOs), persons with disabilities within broadcasting, government officials, senior managers in the broadcasting industry and representatives from the Canadian production sector. *A total of 56 people representing 43 organizations from across Canada were*

interviewed between May and July, 2005.

2) **Stakeholder forum:** The Steering Committee held a *stakeholder forum* in July 2005 in Toronto, which brought together 20 disability NGOs, broadcasters, performers and producers in a facilitated discussion of issues, barriers, tools and initiatives, and 16 observers from government and the broadcasting industry, including two officials from the CRTC.

3) **Best practices:** Research and analysis were conducted, focusing on broadcasting industry initiatives and industry-related initiatives in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada.

Those consulted for the study agree that the presence of persons with disabilities both onscreen and behind the scenes is low, and that negative onscreen portrayals still take place. However, both broadcasters and representatives from the disability community sensed a strong basis for positive change.

RESEARCH FINDINGS INCLUDE:

The creation of a **Public Service Announcement (PSA)** expected to air on CAB member stations in Fall 2006, directed at influencing a positive shift in public attitudes about persons with disabilities.

A review of the **industry content codes** by Spring 2006 to address issues identified in the research relating to the portrayal of persons with disabilities in television programming.

With input from the disability community, development of a **training seminar** for HR and other television managers in order to sensitize the industry to the specific ways in which persons with disabilities can be accommodated in the broadcasting workplace, for implementation in 2006.

Development of an **information package about employment in the broadcasting and production sectors**, for distribution to broadcasters, educators and the disability community, explaining the types of

employment available in broadcasting and production to be posted on the *Diversity in Broadcasting* section of the CAB website.

With input from the disability community and the cooperation of the Radio Television News Directors Association (RTNDA), develop **educational material on inappropriate use of language** in news, for completion in 2006.

Our collective success depends on the collaboration and contribution of all industry partners and includes recommendations for Canada's **independent production sector**, including producers, writers, casting directors, directors and other content creators. They all play a powerful role in creating more onscreen presence and more accurate portrayals of persons with disabilities.

Community channels – Stakeholder forum participants observed that cable distribution undertakings can make a valued contribution to inclusion by making community channels available and accessible to programming initiatives by persons with disabilities while also providing training facilities.

The research highlighted the fundamental role of Canada's **education sector** in the development of human resources for the industry. With the support of broadcasters and industry partners, educators at all levels can help guide students with disabilities to career paths in broadcasting and/or television production.

The significant degree of learning involved in this comprehensive research study has informed the range of initiatives, tools and recommendations that Canada's private broadcasters are committed to implementing to achieve positive change.

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