

The Presence, Portrayal and Participation

of Persons with Disabilities
in Television Programming

Final Report by the
Canadian Association of Broadcasters



CAB | ACR

September 16, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	1
Background.....	1
The Steering Committee.....	3
The Outreach Committee	3
The Research Study.....	5
Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations	8
Report of the Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television	8
Implementing Initiatives.....	9
Reflecting the Research Findings: Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations.....	9
Recommendations for Industry Partners.....	18
Measuring Progress	20
Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations	21
Recommendations for Industry Partners.....	25
Appendix – Members of the CAB Outreach Committee.....	26

Foreword

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) – the national voice of Canada’s private broadcasters, representing the vast majority of Canadian programming services, including private television and radio services, networks and specialty, pay and pay-per-view television services – is pleased to submit to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) our Research Report on The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming (the Report).

Canada’s private broadcasters are committed to bringing greater diversity to Canada’s broadcasting system, both on-screen and behind the scenes. This was the focus and intent of this report and the report of the Task Force for Cultural Diversity in Television, which provided a comprehensive foundation of research and Best Practices for broadcasters and industry partners alike on advancing the place of ethnocultural groups and Aboriginal Peoples in television.

This research study on the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming has provided a tremendous level of learning and exposure to new ideas about diversity through broad consultation, a very successful Stakeholder Forum and research on international Best Practices.

Given the positive experience of this research process and the detailed Report that follows, Canada’s private broadcasters are confident that we have built a foundation for change, where a commitment shared by our industry partners will deliver a future where persons with disabilities have equitable representation in their presence, portrayal and participation in Canada’s private television industry.

Background

In January 2004, the CRTC released Public Notice 2004-2, Introduction to Broadcasting Decisions CRTC 2004-6 to 2004-27 renewing the licences of 22 specialty services.

In Public Notice 2004-2, the Commission addressed the issue of the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming. Issues pertaining to persons with disabilities had been raised by several intervenors at the hearing on specialty service licence renewals, and had been discussed with the Canadian Association of Broadcasters during its intervention.

As a result, the Commission requested in Public Notice 2004-2 that the CAB develop and file an action plan with the Commission, outlining the process proposed to examine and address these issues.

Lead by its Joint Societal Issues Committee (JSIC), comprised of members from all sectors of the broadcasting industry to deal with social policy issues affecting the industry, the CAB undertook a number of consultations and background research in developing an Action Plan that was submitted to the Commission in August 2004.

The Action Plan proposed the following initiatives:

- Creation of a Steering Committee from the JSIC to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan;
- Creation of an Outreach Committee, comprised of persons with disabilities to serve as an advisory group on the implementation of the CAB's Action Plan; and
- Three streams of work for inclusion in a research report to the CRTC: comprehensive consultations; focus group research; and Best Practices research.

In addition, the CAB proposed the development of a toolkit for broadcasters, to assist its members in advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the industry and addressing presence and portrayal issues on-screen.

In a letter issued by the CRTC to the CAB on November 15, 2004 the Commission stated it was satisfied with the CAB's proposed strategy, citing the "wealth of information provided in the Action Plan...attests to the value of a consultative and research based approach to this process."

With the submission of the attached Research Report, the CAB has now completed the above noted initiatives that were outlined in its Action Plan. Given the process of developing the Action Plan, establishing committees, conducting research and creating a comprehensive report, the CAB has undertaken a significant level of consultation with the Canadian disability community. The degree of learning involved has also been significant, and has informed the range of Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations to follow.

The Steering Committee

The CAB Steering Committee on the Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming (the Steering Committee) was created as a sub-committee of the JSIC to guide the research undertaking and develop recommended initiatives for broadcasters. The Steering Committee was comprised of representatives from English- and French-language conventional and specialty & pay television broadcasters:

Sarah Crawford, Vice-President, Public Affairs, CHUM Limited (Chair)

Kent Brown, Director, Human Resources, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network

Kim Carter, Director, Human Resources, Alliance Atlantis Communications Inc.

Ben-Marc Diendéré, Conseiller aux relations institutionnelles, Quebecor Média Inc.

Melanie Farrell, Director, Community Liaison, OMNI Television

Jerry Humes, Director, Human Resources, Pelmorex Inc.

Jean-Pierre Laurendeau, Vice-président, Programmation, Canal D, Astral Media

Jonathan Medline, Director, Regulatory Affairs, Global Television Network

Mark Prasuhn, COO/General, Manager, One: Body, Mind & Spirit, Vision TV

Ruth Schreier, Manager, Regulatory Affairs, CORUS Entertainment Inc

Fiona Sterling, Manager, Compensation and Employment Practices, Human Resources, Bell Globemedia Inc.

The Outreach Committee

The CAB Outreach Committee on the Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities was created to:

- Act as an Advisory Group to the CAB Steering Committee on the implementation of the CAB's Action Plan relating to issues concerning the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities; and
- Provide the CAB Steering Committee with advice and feedback on various proposals and recommendations put forward to advance the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming and within the industry.

Comprised of persons with disabilities, many of whom had previous experience within the broadcasting industry, members included:

Leesa Levinson
Actor (Toronto)

Gavin Lumsden
Executive Producer, Rogers Television (Ottawa)

James MacDonald
Consultant & Past Chair, CAB Board of Directors (Toronto)

Don Peuramaki
President, Fireweed Media (Toronto)

John Rae
President, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (Toronto)

Janus Raudkivi
Journalist (Toronto)

Enza Ronaldi
Senior Coordinator, Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario (Scarborough)

Rachael Ross
President, National Educational Association of Disabled Students (Victoria)

Patrick Tanguay
Corporate Programs and Services Advisor, Canadian Space Agency (Longueuil)

Biographical notes on the members of the CAB Outreach Committee are included in an attached Appendix.

The Research Study

The CAB retained CONNECTUS Consulting Inc. to undertake the research study on the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming (the Study). Under the direction of the CAB Steering Committee, the Study was based on the following qualitative methodologies:

- 1) *Extensive consultations* through one-on-one interviews with representatives from disability non-government organizations (disability NGOs), persons with disabilities within the broadcasting sector, 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 31 and July 31, 2005.

- 2) *A Stakeholder Forum* held July 15, 2005 in Toronto, which brought together 20 disability NGOs, broadcasters, performers and producers in a facilitated discussion of issues, barriers and tools/initiatives.

An additional 16 observers from government and the broadcasting industry attended the event; these included members of the CAB Steering Committee overseeing the research; members of the CAB Outreach Committee of persons with disabilities serving as an advisory group to the Study; and two officials from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

- 3) *Best Practices* research and analysis, focused on broadcasting industry initiatives and industry-related initiatives in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada.

The CAB recognizes that the Action Plan and the CRTC's response to the Action Plan indicated that focus groups would be part of the research process. However, subsequent discussions with the research team identified the greater benefits of holding a larger, one-day Stakeholder Forum that would bring the disability community, broadcasters and industry-related organizations together in a facilitated environment of discussion. For example, it was believed that a Stakeholder Forum would include the participation of experts in disability issues and a broader cross-section of representatives from Canada's disability community that focus groups would not provide.

As such, the Stakeholder Forum – which was held toward the completion of both consultations and Best Practices phases of the research – served as a filter for discussion and an arena for debate on preliminary research findings. This comprehensive approach to the subject matter has ultimately yielded a rich set of findings that will inform the implementation of initiatives to advance the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming.

This approach to the research has yielded a comprehensive Report that provides extensive detail on the issues and barriers challenging persons with disabilities, in society and in television programming alike. It further provides a series of considerations for a broadcaster toolkit in moving forward on greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in our industry and for addressing issues of presence and portrayal on-screen.

All findings from the research are outlined in detail in the attached study. The CAB Steering Committee and Outreach Committee, have reviewed the findings in detail and support the following as key points of consensus for the development of a set of initiatives directed at improving the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming:

- 1) Canada's private broadcasters are committed to the development and implementation of initiatives that improve and advance diversity in the industry. Last year, the CAB's Television and Specialty and Pay Boards adopted the recommendations advanced by the Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television. These recommendations were made following a major qualitative and quantitative study on ethnocultural minorities and Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian television in 2004.

In addition, television broadcasters report on their progress in advancing diversity within their station(s) in their annual diversity reports to the CRTC. The CAB notes that in 2004 reporting on diversity initiatives was expanded to include initiatives that focus on persons with disabilities.

- 2) Canada's private broadcasters believe that all media, and particularly television can play a strong role in changing public attitudes on social issues, and that greater visibility, more accurate depictions and positive messaging can strongly influence inclusive practices across society. This perspective was echoed by all groups consulted for this Study.
- 3) Consultations undertaken for this research revealed widespread support for the business case for diversity in broadcasting – and more specifically, the business case for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in television programming, both on-screen and behind the scenes.

This is based on the recognition that (i) more on-screen presence and accurate portrayal will reach and increase audiences not only from Canadians with disabilities, but from their families, friends and caregivers; (ii) broadcasters can gain a competitive edge by tapping into all creative resources available to them, including persons with disabilities; and (iii) all employees in the broadcasting industry can potentially benefit from accommodations that are made for employees with disabilities (e.g. automatic doors, ramps, etc.).

- 4) There is general agreement among those consulted for the study that the presence of persons with disabilities both on-screen and behind the scenes is low, and that negative portrayals still take place.

However, the research findings and discussions with the CAB Steering Committee and CAB Outreach Committee indicate that broadcasters and representatives from the disability community sense a strong basis for positive change at the present time. This is due to (i) the positive reception that this research, and its inclusive basis of consultation and dialogue have received in the disability community, and (ii) the perception that some progress has recently been made in both on-screen presence and more accurate portrayals of persons with disabilities.

Consequently, it is agreed by both Committees that initiatives need to be undertaken in both the shorter and longer term, in order to leverage this momentum for change.

- 5) Broadcasters are committed to improving the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities through specific initiatives described below, but their success ultimately depends on the commitment of our industry partners to advancements and improvements. As the Report points out, this is especially true in the case of Canada's independent production sector, where programming is conceived and created for purchase and distribution by broadcasters and other content providers. Research findings indicate that independent producers, together with writers, casting directors, directors and other creators can play a powerful role in creating more on-screen presence and more accurate portrayals of persons with disabilities.
- 6) The community channel plays a very important role in the broadcasting system as a point of access to the airwaves for Canadians. As noted in the Research Report, 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 for persons with disabilities.
- 7) Canada's education sector plays a fundamentally important role in the development of human resources for the industry. With the support of broadcasters and industry partners, educators at all levels can play a very important part in guiding students with disabilities to career paths in broadcasting and/or television production.
- 8) In a world marked by technological development and content convergence, it is important to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities across distribution platforms and across media. As video content becomes available through alternate means, and as linkages continue to develop between various types of content providers and content distributors, opportunities to include persons with disabilities as performers, creators or other roles extend well beyond television.

- 9) Building communication and outreach between broadcasters and the disability community is a key starting point for a broadcaster toolkit.

Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations

The CAB has considered the following issues throughout the development of the Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations to follow:

- Research previously carried out by the broadcasting industry on cultural diversity in television;
- The level at which Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations are best implemented within the broadcasting system;
- How to report on Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations so they reflect the findings of the research; and
- How to measure progress on implementation going forward.

Report of the Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television

The CAB notes that our research on presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming fundamentally differs from research previously carried out by the Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television (the Task Force).

As a very important distinction between the two areas of research, the study carried out by the Task Force included a quantitative component (i.e. on-screen measurement of cultural diversity) and content analysis (i.e. analysis of on-screen presence) of Canada's ethnocultural and Aboriginal communities that ultimately guided a number of recommendations and proposed Best Practices.

This research on the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming was strictly qualitative in its design; there was no quantitative on-screen measurement applied in this research. This is because it was generally agreed by the CRTC and the private broadcasting community that on-screen presence of persons with disabilities is very low, and on-screen counting would yield little in the way of useful results.

As a further consideration, although persons with disabilities and ethnocultural and Aboriginal people together represent important aspects of Canada's diversity, there are differences distinct to and additional for persons with disabilities in terms of the issues and barriers they encounter, whether in society as a whole or in broadcasting more specifically.

Given the differences in research methodologies and research subjects, the CAB recognizes that the recommendations and proposed Best Practices that emerged from the work of the Task Force on Cultural Diversity cannot simply be mapped onto Initiatives, Tools and

Recommendations concerning the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming.

However, the CAB also notes that those Best Practices identified in the Report of the Task Force on Cultural Diversity – as well as the Best Practices included in the attached Research Report – will be examined carefully by broadcasters in developing and reviewing their corporate diversity plans, as they may be helpful in moving forward on initiatives for persons with disabilities.

Implementing Initiatives

In developing the Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations to follow, the CAB Steering Committee agreed that their implementation must take place in one of three levels: (i) at the level of the individual station, broadcaster or corporate group, (ii) at the level of the broadcasting industry as a whole, or (iii) within other designated sectors, such as the independent production sector or the education sector.

It was also recognized that the primary level of implementation will occur at the level of the individual station, broadcaster or corporate group. Given this, it was agreed by the CAB Steering Committee and the CAB Outreach Committee that broadcasters must develop and implement initiatives that are tailored to meet their individual business realities.

Accordingly, all of the initiatives, tools and recommendations outlined below were designed so that they may be incorporated by broadcasters in their corporate diversity plans, where appropriate, and measured on a yearly basis through CRTC annual reporting requirements.

However, it must be kept in mind that the broadcasting system and the markets served by that system are highly complex and differentiated. While some broadcasters operate in very high density urban markets, others serve smaller population centers. This means that, in terms of developing and implementing diversity initiatives, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach. Individual broadcasters, while sharing an overall goal of a more diverse system, need to tailor their initiatives to accommodate their business and operational needs.

As an example of this, the U.K.-based initiative *Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network* (BCIDN) as described in Appendix A of the Research Report, is subscribed to and supported by all U.K. broadcasters, but each broadcaster has a different way of implementing initiatives in order to account for their particular market realities.

Reflecting the Research Findings: Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations

As noted in the Foreword, the objective of this research is to establish a strong basis for the equitable presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming. In order to achieve this, the CAB Steering Committee and Outreach

Committee have carefully examined all aspects of the Research Report and Best Practices, and have determined the following as key Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations for development and implementation in the near term, i.e. over the next one- to two-year period.

The CAB Steering Committee approached these Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations on the basis of the *core issues* that were raised by persons with disabilities, broadcasters, industry partners and other stakeholders throughout the course of the research. The ten issues outlined below are used to inform the overall objectives, tools and timing for implementation in each case.

A summary grid follows on [page 21](#).

Issue:

A) Negative Attitudes and Misperceptions of Persons with Disabilities

The clear, predominant concern raised throughout the course of the research was negative social attitudes, misperceptions and misinformation concerning persons with disabilities and life with a disability.

There is little doubt that broadcasters can exercise significant influence over public attitudes and perceptions about persons with disabilities, and in doing so can take concrete steps to encourage attitudinal shifts.

Canada's private broadcasters are committed to increasing on-screen presence, improve portrayals and grow participation of persons with disabilities in television programming through all initiatives noted below.

Tools:

- 1) The CAB will create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) directed at influencing a positive shift in public attitudes about persons with disabilities that may be broadcast on our members' stations.
- 2) The CAB will review its Industry Content Codes to address issues identified in the research relating to the portrayal of persons with disabilities in television programming. These Industry Codes include the CAB Code of Ethics, CAB Sex-role Portrayal Code for Television and Radio Programming, and the CAB Voluntary Code Regarding Violence in Television Programming and serve to hold Canada's private broadcasters accountable for the content they air.

Implementation:

- 1) The CAB will, with the input of representatives from Canada's disability community, coordinate and undertake the launch of the PSA for the Fall of 2006.
- 2) Further to the recommendations of the Task Force for Cultural Diversity in Television, the CAB is in the process of reviewing its Codes to address issues and concerns identified in the Task Force's research findings. The CAB has already indicated to the Commission that it will also consider the research findings identified in this report in its review of the Codes. The CAB anticipates finalizing its review of Industry Codes by Spring of 2006.

Issue:

B) Lack of Participation (employment) in the Industry by Persons with Disabilities

There is a lack of participation, particularly with respect to employment, among persons with disabilities in television programming. This was found to be due in large part to a lack of communication and information accessible to persons with disabilities about employment opportunities in the broadcasting industry as a whole.

In this case, the CAB's objective is to increase access to information regarding employment opportunities in broadcasting, for the disability community.

Tools:

Industry Level

- 1) The CAB will develop an information package about employment in the broadcasting and production sectors, for wide distribution to broadcasters, educators, and the disability community. The information package would include a brochure explaining the types of employment available in broadcasting and production. It would be posted on the *Diversity in Broadcasting* section of the CAB website and would be distributed to CAB members for use at job fairs and other recruiting practices.

Broadcaster Level

- 2) Broadcasters will develop scholarships, bursaries and/or internships, where appropriate, as means to focus students with disabilities on potential careers in broadcasting. Broadcasters will also offer, where appropriate, training for new employees with disabilities in the industry and/or develop other means for industry orientation such as mentoring and job shadowing.

Implementation:

- 1) The CAB will begin work on this initiative immediately through its appropriate committees, for completion in 2006.
- 2) Broadcasters will incorporate these tools in their corporate diversity plans, where appropriate, where they will be reviewed on a yearly basis through CRTC annual reporting requirements.

Issue:**C) Accommodating Persons with Disabilities in Television Broadcasting Industry**

Throughout the course of this research, issues concerning accommodation of persons with disabilities in the workforce arose, with particular attention to the need to better accommodate persons with disabilities in the broadcasting industry.

The CAB's objective is to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the industry by better accommodating their needs.

Tool:

- 1) The CAB will develop a training seminar for HR and other managers in television broadcasting. Such a training seminar will be developed with input from the disability community and will serve to sensitize the industry to the specific – and often cost-effective – ways in which persons with disabilities can be accommodated in the broadcasting workplace.

Implementation:

- 1) In order to implement this initiative and design this tool, the CAB will investigate available training for adaptation to television broadcaster settings. For example, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work offers a series of training modules, as well as additional training information on their website. The training seminar would be designed for implementation in 2006.

Issue:

D) Presence Issues and Negative Portrayals of Persons with Disabilities in *Dramatic programming*

With respect to *dramatic programming*, the CAB's research uncovered two core concerns: (i) continuing low presence of persons with disabilities on-screen and (ii) continuing negative portrayals of persons with disabilities in characterization.

By improving the on-screen presence of persons with disabilities, and by improving depictions ensuring accurate characterizations and storylines, broadcasters hope to address these issues with their industry partners in the independent production sector.

The research uncovered a number of concerns with respect to the presence and portrayal of persons with disabilities in the production sector, and presents evidence that a lack of consultation and effort on the part of the production sector are major barriers to inclusion.

Tools:

- 1) CAB member companies will ensure production partners understand and share in broadcasters' commitment to positive and accurate depictions of persons with disabilities on television through such things as licensing agreements, producer guidelines and/or contracts with producers.
- 2) The CAB's Industry Content Codes will also provide a foundation for positively portraying persons with disabilities in programming. Therefore, the CAB will also distribute its Industry Codes to the production sector once it has completed its current review.
- 3) The CAB will issue a communiqué to the independent production community outlining its diversity initiatives. The CAB will also underscore the absolute necessity of the independent production community's active commitment to and involvement in many of these diversity initiatives.

Implementation:

- 1) CAB members will implement these or similar initiatives immediately
- 2) The CAB's review of Industry Content Codes is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2006
- 3) The CAB plans to issue this communiqué in September 2005

Issue:

E) Presence Issues and Low/inaccurate Coverage of Disability Issues in News and Information Programming

The research also revealed concerns about a lack of on-air presence among persons with disabilities, and low or inaccurate coverage of disability issues, in news and information programming.

The research has sent a clear message that more on-air role models are needed to initiate a longer term process of more on-air participation by persons with disabilities in our industry. At the same time, the research revealed concerns about the level, quality and accuracy of stories covering disability issues in news and information programming; our objective is to rectify these issues.

Tools:

Industry Level

- 1) The CAB, working through its committees, will consult with the Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) on the development of local outreach and other initiatives that broadcasters can implement to improve opportunities for on-air presence and coverage of disability issues.

Broadcaster Level

- 2) Stations/services will develop local outreach measures involving the active participation of the local disability community, and the development of databases comprised of subject matter experts with disabilities.

Implementation:

- 1) Through its Committees, the CAB will initiate discussions on these matters with RTNDA in 2005.
- 2) Individual broadcaster initiatives will be advanced through broadcaster diversity plans going forward, and reported to the CRTC annually.

Issue:

F) Use of Inappropriate Language Regarding Persons with Disabilities in News and Information Programming

The CAB's extensive consultations throughout the course of this research revealed a fundamental concern about the continuing use of inappropriate or insensitive language regarding persons with disabilities in news and information programming.

The CAB believes there is a clear need to educate the broadcasting industry about inappropriate use of language.

Tool:

- 1) The CAB, seeking the input of the disability community and the cooperation of the RTNDA, will develop educational material on inappropriate use of language. This material is envisioned as an information brochure that would be circulated to CAB and RTNDA members and posted on the CAB's *Diversity in Broadcasting* section of its website and its members' websites.

Implementation:

- 1) By investigating existing initiatives on inappropriate and insensitive language, the CAB will undertake this initiative with RTNDA immediately, for completion in 2006.

Issue:

G) Lack of Industry Reference Points or Standards Concerning the Depiction and Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities

With respect to the portrayal of persons with disabilities in television programming, the research found a general concern with the absence of industry standards or reference points for broadcaster use.

Tool:

- 1) Recognizing that such standards and guidelines can serve a useful function in the advancement of broadcaster diversity initiatives concerning the fair and accurate portrayal of persons with disabilities in television programming, the CAB will consider the findings of the attached Research Report in its review of Industry Content Codes.

Implementation:

- 1) The CAB's review of Industry Content Codes is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2006

Recommendation:

Given the research findings concerning the use of inappropriate or insensitive language regarding persons with disabilities in news and information programming and the low or inaccurate coverage of disability issues in news and information programming, the CAB recommends the RTNDA also review its Code of Ethics in the context of these findings.

Issue:

H) Lack of Communication and Outreach between Broadcasting Industry and Disability Community

The research findings show there is a fundamental lack of communications and outreach between the broadcasting industry and the disability community. The CAB's objective is therefore to increase on-going, meaningful dialogue between the two sectors.

Tools:

Industry Level

- 1) In order to facilitate the integration of outreach initiatives in broadcasters' corporate diversity plans, the CAB will provide a list of consumer and service disability NGOs, by region, on the *Diversity in Broadcasting* section of its website.
- 2) The CAB has also recently taken steps to ensure the *Diversity in Broadcasting* section of its website is accessible to persons with disabilities and encourages its members and industry partners to initiate a similar exercise in order to foster better communications with the disability community.

Broadcaster Level

- 3) Individual broadcasters will work to establish connections with local disability organizations.
- 4) Individual broadcasters will establish and implement a mechanism for regular communication with the disability community.

Implementation:

These initiatives are on-going, and will also be included in broadcasters' corporate diversity plans.

Issue:**I) Lack of Internal Communication among Broadcasters regarding Disability Issues, Barriers and Initiatives**

The research findings also noted a general lack of communication within the industry regarding disability issues, barriers and initiatives and a clear need to improve internal communications.

The CAB's objective is to develop of a series of information materials and mechanisms that will lead to better communication among CAB members about issues, barriers and initiatives regarding persons with disabilities.

Tools:

- 1) The CAB will keep its members informed about diversity initiatives through its various committees. For example, the CAB Cultural Diversity Advisory Committee will be renamed the CAB Diversity Committee and expand its mandate to include disability issues.
- 2) The CAB will communicate information regarding disability issues, barriers and initiatives to the CAB membership through a number of information vehicles, including the CAB weekly Updates, President's Reports, trade publication columns and other methods.
- 3) In order to maximize awareness of disability issues in the broadcasting community overall, the CAB Convention will be used to promote awareness of diversity issues beginning in 2005.
- 4) The CAB will ensure this report is available on-line in accessible formats on the CAB website.

Implementation:

These initiatives on internal industry communications are to begin immediately with the release of the Research Report in September 2005.

Recommendations for Industry Partners

Independent Production Sector

Improving the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television programming is of vital importance to broadcasters in ensuring their programming is reflective of Canadian society. Given that the independent production sector provides the majority of dramatic programming for purchase and airing by broadcasters, the participation of the independent production sector in this initiative is critical.

As noted above, there is a lack of involvement among performers and creators with disabilities in the independent production sector, and an on-going concern with negative portrayal through characterization and storylines.

The CAB therefore recommends that the independent production sector, including but not limited to, the Canadian Film and Television Production Association (CFTPA) and l'Association des producteurs de films et de télévision du Québec (APFTQ), take the following steps:

- 1) Undertake measures that will both increase and accurately identify the talent pool of performers and creators with disabilities including producers, writers, and directors.
- 2) Adopt initiatives similar to ACTRA Toronto's *Mainstream Now!* directory which assists broadcasters and producers in identifying creative talent from the disability community.
- 3) Develop accessible diversity sections on their respective websites as conduits of information for the disability community, performers and creators with disabilities, and other stakeholders.

The CAB recommends that these initiatives be implemented by relevant industry associations by the end of 2006.

Cable Community Channels

As noted in the research report, cable distribution undertakings can make a valuable contribution to inclusion and diversity by making community channels available and accessible to programming initiatives by persons with disabilities while also providing training facilities for persons with disabilities.

The CAB notes that in Broadcasting Public Notice 2002-61 *Policy Framework for Community-based Media* the Commission reaffirmed that the overall objectives of community-based media is:

- To ensure the creation and exhibition of more locally-produced, locally-reflective community programming; and
- To foster a greater diversity of voices and alternative choices by facilitating new entrants at the local level.

The CAB notes that cable community channels have established a number of training programs that can provide persons with disabilities with valuable skills development opportunities. Given that the research findings supported the need for more training and mentorship opportunities for persons with disabilities, the CAB recommends that cable licensees operating community cable channels develop and implement diversity plans aimed at promoting better participation of persons with disabilities in community programming.

Other Industry Partners

The CAB recommends that its other industry partners, including but not limited to, the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), Union des artistes (UDA), Writers Guild of Canada (WGC), Association des réalisateurs et réalisatrices du Québec (ARRQ), and the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC):

- 1) Develop, maintain and make available a database of actors, directors and writers with disabilities and casting agents who specialize in casting individuals with disabilities. This database should be developed in consultation with members from the disability community; and
- 2) Develop accessible diversity sections on their respective websites as conduits of information for the disability community, performers and creators with disabilities, and other stakeholders.

Measuring Progress

As discussed in the implementation section above, Canada's private broadcasters will continue to include initiatives and activities regarding persons with disabilities in their annual diversity reports to the CRTC. In this way, through a mechanism of regular diversity reporting to the Commission, broadcasters will be accountable for continuously measuring progress on the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television.

Moreover, in Broadcasting Public Notice CRTC 2005-24 *Commission's response to the report of the Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television*, the Commission asked the CAB to begin reporting annually on its progress in implementing the industry initiatives recommended by the Task Force. Accordingly, the CAB will also report on its progress in implementing the tools and initiatives outlined in this Report in its annual submission to the Commission. The CAB notes that its first report is due March 21, 2006.

Initiatives, Tools and Recommendations
The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television

	Issue	Objective	Recommendation	Tools	Timing and Implementation
A	Negative attitudes and misperceptions of persons with disabilities	Influence the public and our audiences about persons with disabilities to encourage attitudinal shift	1) Increase presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in television in all initiatives noted 2) Create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that may be broadcast on CAB member stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSA for use by all broadcasters for airing at any time. • CAB Industry Content Codes 	CAB to coordinate and undertake launch of PSA for broadcast in the Fall 2006.
B	Lack of participation (employment) in the industry by persons with disabilities	Increase access to information about employment opportunities in broadcasting to disability community	Develop an information package about employment in the broadcasting and production sectors for wide distribution to broadcasters, educators and disability community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible brochure • <i>Diversity in Broadcasting</i> section of CAB website • Job fairs/recruiting • Scholarships and internships (station level) • Mentoring and job shadowing for new employees with disabilities (station level) 	Through its committees, CAB to begin work immediately for completion in 2006

	Issue	Objective	Recommendation	Tools	Timing and Implementation
C	Accommodating persons with disabilities in television broadcasting industry	Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the industry by better accommodating their needs.	With the input of the disability community, develop training seminar for managers in television broadcasting industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training seminar 	CAB to investigate available training for adaptation to television settings (e.g. Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work) for implementation in 2006
D	Presence issues and negative portrayals of persons with disabilities in dramatic programming	Increase presence; improve depictions by ensuring accurate characterizations and storylines	Broadcasters to use their existing licensing agreements, guidelines and/or contracts with producers to enforce positive depiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreements with producers • CAB Industry Content Codes • Distribute revised CAB Codes to industry partners 	CAB Board to initiate process in 2005 by issuing communique to independent production community
E	Presence issues and low/inaccurate coverage of disability issues in news and information programming	Improve on-air presence of persons with disabilities and improve coverage of disability issues in television news & information programming	Consult with RTNDA and disability community on development of local outreach measures and other initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local outreach initiatives (e.g. consult with disability groups) • Develop database of subject matter experts (station level) 	Through its Committees, CAB to initiate discussion with RTNDA in 2005; initiatives advanced through broadcaster diversity plans
F	Use of inappropriate language respecting persons with disabilities in news and information programming	Educate the broadcasting sector about inappropriate and insensitive language on an on-going basis	Seeking the input of the disability community, CAB to work with RTNDA to develop educational material on inappropriate language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information brochure circulated to CAB and RTNDA members, posted on-line in accessible format 	CAB to undertake with RTNDA immediately for completion in 2006

	Issue	Objective	Recommendation	Tools	Timing and Implementation
G	Lack of industry reference points or standards concerning the portrayal of persons with disabilities	Create a set of guidelines and standards for broadcaster use	Integrate standards and guidelines into review of Industry Content Codes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of CAB Industry Content Codes 	Review process is underway, proactively including persons with disabilities; completion in Spring 2006
H	Lack of communication and outreach between broadcasting industry and disability community	Increase on-going meaningful dialogue between the two sectors	On an individual broadcaster basis, establish connections with local disability organizations and implement a mechanism for regular communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate station outreach initiatives into corporate diversity planning • Develop <i>Diversity in Broadcasting</i> section of CAB website as main source of information on Persons with Disability providing links to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Disability groups by region ➤ Broadcasters and industry partners initiatives and activities • Ensure <i>Diversity in Broadcasting</i> content is accessible 	On-going, with inclusion of initiatives in corporate diversity plans

	Issue	Objective	Recommendation	Tools	Timing and Implementation
I	Lack of internal communication among broadcasters regarding disability issues, barriers and initiatives	Improve communication about disability issues and barriers within the broadcasting industry	Create materials and mechanisms for better communicating information about disability issues, barriers and initiatives to CAB membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repurpose CAB Cultural Diversity Committee to the CAB Diversity Committee • Circulate information to CAB membership through Updates, President's Reports, etc. • Maximize awareness of issue through coverage by mainstream and trade publications • On-line report and research document accessible on-line • Use CAB Convention to promote diversity issues • Ensure Persons with Disability remains on the agenda of CAB Committees' meetings. 	Begins with release of CAB Report in September 2005; CAB initiative currently underway to improve accessibility of website

Recommendations for Industry Partners

	Issue	Objective	Recommendation	Tools	Timing and Implementation
	Presence issues and negative portrayals in the independent production sector	Improve the presence of performers and creators with disabilities on-screen/behind the scenes and more accurately depict characters with disabilities	Recommend that the production sector (i) take steps to increase/ identify the talent pool of performers and creators with disabilities and (ii) consult with disability groups and experts about characterization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producer, Writer, Director etc. Associations should develop resource similar to ACTRA Toronto's <i>Mainstream Now!</i> publication • Develop accessible diversity sections within production industry websites 	Recommend implementation in 2006
	Lack of Access and Training Opportunities	Provide training opportunities and skills development in local communities	Cable licensees operating community channels should identify diversity strategies aimed at encouraging better participation of persons with disabilities in community programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement diversity plans 	Recommend implementation in 2006
	Use of inappropriate or insensitive language regarding persons with disabilities in news and information programming and the low or inaccurate coverage of disability issues in news and information programming	Improve portrayal/depiction of persons with disabilities and coverage of disability issues by television news	RTNDA to consult with disability community on how to improve portrayal of persons with disabilities and coverage of disability issues in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review RTNDA Code of Ethics in context of research findings 	Recommend review as soon as possible and in conjunction with CAB review of Industry Content Codes

Appendix – Members of the CAB Outreach Committee

James B. Macdonald operates his own consulting practice, working primarily with clients in broadcasting and communications. Mr. Macdonald has held a number of senior positions within the broadcasting industry including: Senior Vice President and Chief Media Services Officer, BCE Media Ltd., President and Chief Executive Officer of WIC Television Ltd. and WIC Entertainment Group Ltd. (Western International Communications), President and Chief Executive Officer of Niagara Television Limited, and various senior management positions with Rogers Broadcasting Limited.

Mr. Macdonald is presently a Board member of the Ontario Association of Broadcasters; Stornoway Communications, trustee of Doctors Hospital Foundation (now the Kensington Health Centre), an Industry Adjudicator (National Television Panel) Canadian Broadcast Standards Council and on the national Board of LOVE (Leave Out Violence Everywhere). Previously, Mr. MacDonald was Chairman of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, Chair of Canadian Digital Television (CDTV), Governor of the Banff Festival and was on the Board of Directors of WIC Television Ltd., Niagara Television Limited, WIC Entertainment Ltd., Report On Business Television, (ROBtv), Television Bureau of Canada (TVB), Doctors Hospital, Chedoke-McMaster Hospital, and the Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

In 1997, Mr. Macdonald was the recipient of the Ontario Broadcasters Association; Broadcaster of the Year Award and in 2004 was inducted into the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame.

John Rae is the President of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC). John has had a 24-year career in the Ontario Public Service, holding a number of positions including: Program Officer in the Accessibility Directorate of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Consultant with the Centre for Disability and Work, and Education Officer with the former Employment Equity Commission.

John has been a board member of many human and disability rights organizations. He has been President of PAL Reading Services, the Canadian Legal Advocacy, Information and Research Association of the Disabled (CLAIR), the Blind Organization of Ontario with Self-Help Tactics (BOOST), the Don Vale Community Centre, and Co-chaired the Coalition on Human Rights for the Handicapped, which secured the first human rights coverage for persons with disabilities in Ontario. He now represents the AEBC on the National Council of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD). In April of 2000, Mr. Rae received the Individual Human Rights Award from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).

In June 2004, Mr. Rae was elected to the Board of the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies, where he brings his views on consumer involvement in all new research to the work of the Centre. He has recently been appointed to the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, representing the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

Don Peuramaki has extensive experience in media: television, radio, video production, visual art and music. He is currently the President of FIREWEED MEDIA PRODUCTIONS INC., an independent production company owned and operated by people with disabilities.

Some of his production credits include executive and senior producer for the award-winning weekly co-production, Disability Network (DNET) for eight seasons at CBC Television and a two hour special for CBC sports on the 1996 Paralympic Games which drew an audience of over 1.5 million viewers. Through DNET and other media initiatives he has provided training and work experience to over fifty people with disabilities, most of who continue to work in the industry or related areas.

Don is presently on the advisory board for the “Projections” International Film Festival which features films produced, written or directed by people with disabilities, and the “Abilities Festival” which showcases the work of people with disabilities in the arts.

A recipient of several awards including: ACTRA’s “Into the Mainstream” Award, B’nai Brith’s Media Human Rights Award, International Film and TV Festival of New York Awards, and Columbus International Film and Video Festival Awards, Don is a strong proponent for the inclusion of the accurate, fair and complete representation of the rich tapestry of Canadian society in film and television.

Patrick Tanguay is the Corporate Programs and Services Advisor for the Canadian Space Agency. For the past two years Patrick has worked with K  roul, a non-profit organization that develops and promotes accessible tourism opportunities for persons with disabilities, where he has worked on several disability issues including access to buildings such as restaurants, hotels, and museums.

Patrick has been with the federal public service since 1999 working for Human Resources Development Canada prior to joining the Canadian Space Agency in 2002 where he is responsible for implementing equity programs.

Patrick holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science (1995) from the Universit   de Montr  al and a Master's degree in Public Administration from l'  cole nationale d'administration publique (1997).

Enza Ronaldi is the Senior Coordinator with the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario where she manages the Council Liaison Office providing support to two Minister’s Advisory Councils, which advise the Minister of Community and Social Services on the implementation of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

A strong proponent of universal accessibility and the removal of barriers for people with disabilities in their communities, Enza has held various positions within national, provincial and local community organizations that serve and support people with disabilities, including numerous positions on boards of directors. Enza lives in Toronto with her husband and their two young boys ages 9 and 6.

Leesa Levinson has been an active member of ACTRA Toronto for over 10 years. She is an actor who has made a long-term commitment to advocacy through her numerous volunteer, Board/committee and professional activities related to her field. Leesa has been involved in several coalitions working towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the arts/media including the “Abilities Festival”, “Projections” International Film Festival, and Access 2 Entertainment National Advisory Group. Leesa has consulted for the CRTC, CAB, ACTRA Toronto, ACTRA Fraternal, and has also interacted with the Media Access Office, Hollywood, California, and the U.S. Screen Actors’ Guild Disabilities Committee. A spokesperson for the Scarborough Multiple Sclerosis Society for 10 years, Leesa continues to actively aspire to learn, advocate and promote change in the Canadian Entertainment Industry.

Janus Raudkivi has had an extensive career in journalism, photography and public relations. Having survived a severe stroke seven years ago, Janus has been working hard over the past years on his rehabilitation. A regular contributor to the *Estonian Life* which has a weekly printed subscription of 3,500, Janus also works part time for the Toronto Sun.

Prior to his stroke, Janus worked for the Estonian paper *Our Life* as a staff photographer, and contributed to the French-language weekly *L'Express*.

Janus has been actively involved in a number of organizations including the Baltic Federation, the Estonian Central Commission, and the Progressive Conservative Party among others.

Gavin Lumsden is an Executive Producer for Rogers Television in Ottawa. He is involved in the planning, development and execution of the programming produced by Rogers Television, cable 22. A 13 year television veteran, Gavin first began as a volunteer at Rogers' Lakeshore studio in Toronto, before moving to Ottawa to set up Rogers' Closed Caption Centre. He has since become an acknowledged expert in the field of closed captioning and has been involved in training, consultation and advocacy on behalf of a number of production and broadcast entities. Gavin was heavily involved in the development of the CAB's Closed Captioning Standards and Protocol Manual for English-language Broadcasters which was published in 2003.

Gavin has been involved in the development and creation of over 2,000 programs for Rogers and has received a number of industry awards. In 1996 he created the first fully accessible newscast produced entirely for, and more significantly by, Ottawa's Deaf, Deafened and hard of hearing communities. The program, called "For Listening Eyes" captured the CCTA's national award for outstanding innovation in programming. In 2005 Gavin was recognized for his business achievements, as a recipient of the Ottawa Business Journal's 40 Under 40 award. He is currently working on a documentary feature about Dr Sean Egan, a University of Ottawa professor who passed away this spring while attempting to become the oldest Canadian to summit Mount Everest.

Gavin has a severe binaural hearing loss, and wears hearing aids full time.

Rachael Ross has been the President of the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) for the past 3 years overseeing a number of its initiatives including: *Leadership and Employment Forums*, aimed at sharing information and ideas with respect to the recruitment and accommodation of persons with disabilities in the Canadian employment market; *Access to Success: A Guide for Employers*, which identifies and offers solutions to various barriers to access in Canada's employment market; and *NEADS Online Work System (NOWS)* which provides a unique bilingual channel for hiring companies to post employment and internship opportunities specifically for qualified Canadian post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities.

A social research consultant with expertise in disability related issues like social policy, national disability rights movements, labour market trends as they relate to the disability population, human rights, and post-secondary education, Rachael has gained experience specifically relating to educational and employment issues and the needs of youth and people with disabilities in Canada and has worked with a variety of NGO's, municipal authorities and provincial and federal initiatives.

Rachael's commitments further involve sitting as a board member of the Assistive Technology British Columbia Advisory Committee in Vancouver BC, as a member of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Outreach Committee on the Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with disabilities in Television and Radio, and as Chair of the *Access to Academic Materials for Print-Disabled Post-Secondary Students* initiative in Ottawa, ON. Rachael publicly speaks and participates as a guest on disability issues; education, employment, human rights and policy in Canada.

Rachael is an award winning advocate, having won numerous academic and activism awards; this includes being awarded over two consecutive years the Canadian Council of Disabilities (CCD) national award for her contribution to Canada's disability rights movement. Rachael is last year's winner of a Woman of Distinction award.

The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities on Television Programming

*A Research Report Presented to the
Canadian Association of Broadcasters*

August 2005

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The CAB Outreach Committee on Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities also provided important commentary on the Study and on the Final Report, and we thank them very much for their efforts and attention to detail.

Finally, a special thanks to Susan Wheeler, Senior Director, Policy and Regulatory Affairs with the CAB. As project manager for the Study on behalf of the CAB, Susan provided outstanding support and direction to all aspects of the Study.

Richard Cavanagh
Lil Krstic
Nancy Steele

August 2005

***The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons
with Disabilities in Television***

***A Research Report Presented to the
Canadian Association of Broadcasters***

Final Report – August 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Key Findings.....	2
Persons with Disabilities in Canada.....	3
Key Barriers to Participation and Activity.....	3
Presence of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.....	4
Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities – Dramatic Programming.....	5
Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities – News Programming.....	5
Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.....	6
Considerations for a Broadcaster Toolkit.....	7
Best Practices.....	7
Part I: Introduction and Background.....	8
A) Introduction	8
B) Study Description and Methodologies	9
Part II: Persons with Disabilities in Canada Today.....	13
Population Overview.....	13
Chart 1: Disability Rate by Age and Sex (2001).....	14
Key Indicators of Well-being.....	15
Key Barriers to Participation and Activity.....	15
Part III: Research Findings on Presence, Portrayal and Participation.....	16
A) Presence of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.....	17
Perceived Barriers to On-screen Presence.....	20
Perceived barriers ranged from the very broad.....	20
Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about On-screen Presence.....	23
B) Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming	23
Portrayal in Dramatic Programming	24
Perceived Barriers to Accurate/Positive Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities.....	28
Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about Portrayal.....	30
Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in News Programming.....	31
Perceived Barriers to Accurate/Positive Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in News Programming.....	35
Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about Portrayal in News Programming.....	36
C) Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming	37
Participation by Persons with Disabilities in the Workforce Generally	37
Perspectives on Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.....	39
Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about Participation in Television Programming.....	45

Part IV: Considerations for a Broadcaster Toolkit	47
Considerations for Communication and Outreach	48
Considerations for Human Resource and Accommodation Initiatives by Broadcasters and/or Disability NGOs	49
Considerations for Initiatives Targeting Education Sector Partnerships	50
Considerations for Initiatives Targeting the Production Sector	50
Considerations for Programming Initiatives by Broadcasters	50
Additional Strategies Identified by Stakeholder Forum Participants	51
Bibliography	52
Appendix A: International and Canadian Best Practices	53
Initiatives in The United Kingdom	53
1) Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network (BCIDN)	53
a) BBC.....	54
b) British Sky Broadcasting (BskyB).....	57
c) Carlton Television	58
d) Channel 4.....	58
e) Channel 5.....	60
f) Discovery Networks Europe	61
g) U.K. Film Council	61
h) Granada Media plc (the Group).....	62
i) PACT	64
j) Turner Broadcasting System Europe.....	64
2) Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network (BCIDN) Publications:	65
The Employer’s Forum on Disability	66
Other Initiatives of the Employers’ Forum:	66
Initiatives in the United States	67
1) The California Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities	67
GCEPD Media Access Office	68
2) Tax Credits – State of California	69
3) California Business Leadership Network (CABLN)	70
4) Non-traditional Casting Project	70
5) CBS	71
6) SAG/AFTRA	71
Initiatives in Canada	71
1) Alliance of Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA)	71
2) ACTRA Toronto	72
3) Famous Players Theatres	72
4) Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network	72
Appendix B: Individuals/Organizations Consulted	73
Appendix C: Summary Report of the Stakeholder Forum	77
List of Participants and Observers	87
Appendix D: Other Issues Raised	89
The Research Team	92

***The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons
with Disabilities in Television***

***A Research Report Presented to the
Canadian Association of Broadcasters***

Final Report – August 2005

Executive Summary

This Report presents findings from a three-part research initiative conducted for the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) between May 15 and August 18, 2005 to collect and analyze qualitative evidence of issues, barriers and potential tools or initiatives respecting *The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming* (the Study).

The Study was based on the following methodologies:

- 1) *Extensive consultations* through one-on-one interviews with representatives from disability non-government organizations (disability NGOs), persons with disabilities within the broadcasting sector, 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 31 and July 31, 2005.

- 2) *A Stakeholder Forum* held July 15, 2005 in Toronto, which brought together 20 disability NGOs, broadcasters, performers and producers in a facilitated discussion of issues, barriers and tools/initiatives.

An additional 16 observers from government and the broadcasting industry attended the event; these included members of the CAB Steering Committee overseeing the research; members of the CAB Outreach Committee of persons with disabilities serving as an advisory group to the Study; and two officials from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

- 3) *Best Practices* research and analysis, focused on broadcasting industry initiatives and industry-related initiatives in the U.K., the U.S. and Canada.

The Study was guided by the CAB Steering Committee on Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities and the CAB Outreach Committee. The Steering Committee included representatives from private English- and French-language conventional and specialty & pay television broadcasters, while the Outreach Committee was comprised solely of persons with disabilities, many of which had previous experience in broadcasting.

The Study was focused on researching and reporting on issues, barriers and potential initiatives respecting presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming Programming. As such, the examination of issues relating to assistive broadcast technologies (e.g. closed captioning and described video), radio, advertising and public broadcasting were beyond the scope of the research.

Key Findings

- 1) All Study respondents agree that on-screen presence of persons with disabilities is extremely low. Negative social attitudes, resistance from the independent production sector and a lack of direction from the education sector are viewed as key barriers.
- 2) Negative and stereotypical portrayals of persons with disabilities continue in both dramatic and news programming. Given the small numbers of persons with disabilities on-screen, it is important that portrayals are fair, accurate and complete. Negative social attitudes and a lack of consultation and research by the independent production sector are cited as key barriers.
- 3) Issues of portrayal in news programming are viewed as more critical than in dramatic programming, owing in part to the perceived use of inappropriate or insensitive language referencing persons with disabilities in news coverage.
- 4) Low participation of persons with disabilities in the broadcasting industry, both on-screen and behind the scenes, is attributed to a number of factors, including an education system that does not promote careers in broadcasting.
- 5) There is a general belief that greater inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming Programming presents opportunities for broadcasters to increase audiences, gain a competitive edge and benefit all employees by implementing accommodation measures.
- 6) Study participants agree that building communication/outreach between broadcasters and the disability community is a key starting point for a broadcaster toolkit.

Persons with Disabilities in Canada

The federal government's 2001 national census identifies 3.6 million Canadians as living with a disability, although it is generally agreed that this number is much larger, since not all persons with disabilities will self-identify in official reporting. An additional 2.8 million Canadians are caregivers to family members or a friend with a disability or a long-term health condition.

Persons with disabilities fall below the general population on key indicators of well-being. For example, just over 51 percent of persons with disabilities are employed, compared to 83 percent of those without disabilities. In addition, persons with disabilities encounter significant underemployment stemming from attitudes that undervalue their skills and abilities. However, where accommodations have been made, persons with disabilities have demonstrated success in education and work.

Key Barriers to Participation and Activity

Evidence from previous research and findings from the Study indicate that persons with disabilities encounter significant barriers to education, employment, income and leisure/recreational pursuits. These barriers include:

- *Attitudes* held by Canadians, including perceptions that persons with disabilities cannot perform in education or work at a level matching or exceeding the able-bodied, and an overestimation of the costs of accommodation on the part of employers.
- *Poverty* stemming from high unemployment and underemployment rates;
- Lack of *access*, especially to information, support and jobs, as well as physical access to buildings;
- Lack of accessible *transportation* and the negative impact this has on availability and choice for school, work and personal pursuits;
- Lack of *accommodation* in workplaces and schools, from physical accommodation to the availability of adaptive software;
- *Stigmatization and stereotyping* of persons with disabilities as objects of pity or victims, or as heroically overcoming a disability; and
- *Marginalization* as a result of the above factors, where persons with disabilities are rendered less visible in everyday life, and consequently in the media.

Presence of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

Study respondents agree that persons with disabilities have an extremely low *presence* on television programming of any description. There is a broad perception that persons with disabilities lag far behind other designated groups (women, visible minorities and Aboriginal Peoples) in on-screen presence, and are underrepresented in television programming as a proportion of their presence in the general population.

There is a sense among some respondents from the disability community that presence has improved somewhat, due to the inclusion of a few primary or secondary characters with disabilities in recently aired prime time dramatic programming.

As a secondary impression, many respondents noted that on-screen presence tends to be limited to visible disabilities, while invisible disabilities – such as those related to learning or mental illness – are more rarely presented in programming.

Study respondents identified a number of barriers to the on-screen presence of persons with disabilities, including social attitudes, a small talent pool of performers with disabilities and factors related to work environments in broadcasting and/or production (e.g. stamina required for long days, accessibility of location shooting, studio space/lighting, etc.).

Two barriers emerged as central to limitations of persons with disabilities on-screen: characteristics of the independent production sector and a lack of focus/attention on broadcasting/performing by the education sector.

The independent production sector plays a critical role in the Canadian programming infrastructure, where production companies are important partners for broadcasters, in that they conceive and create programming for purchase by broadcasters. Key creative personnel, such as writers, casting directors and producers develop dramatic roles and hold decision-making power about opportunities for performers with disabilities.

The overall perception on the part of respondents is that the independent production sector is resistant to creating and producing programming that includes persons with disabilities.

A number of respondents identified the education sector as presenting significant barriers to on-screen presence, as students with disabilities are not encouraged to pursue broadcasting or production as viable career paths.

Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities – Dramatic Programming

The portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming – both dramatic and news genres – is top of many for many in the disability community.

Respondents perceived that stereotyping of characters with disabilities remains an issue in dramatic programming, where myths about persons with disabilities are captured in character and storyline, such as weakness, vulnerability and victimization. In addition, depictions of less visible disabilities such as mental illness are seen as inaccurate and “fear-inducing”.

A number of strong opinions about appropriation of voice emerged, with many from the disability community expressing concern about realistic portrayal and loss of job opportunities for performers with disabilities through the use of able-bodied actors in roles for characters with disabilities. However, there is disagreement among people in the disability community about whether a character with a disability should necessarily and always be portrayed by a performer with a disability.

As was the case in findings about on-screen presence, some improvements in portrayal were noted in recent dramatic programming, through efforts to depict the attributes of a character other than that character’s disability. Overall, improvement in portrayals is viewed as a work in progress, and positive portrayals are viewed as particularly important given very low numbers of persons with disabilities on-screen.

There were two predominant views about causes of inaccurate or stereotypical portrayals. First, many respondents indicated that public attitudes permeate the infrastructure of broadcasting and production, and myths or misinformation about disabilities become reproduced in programming.

Second, there was a strong sense that the independent production sector does not engage in the consultations and research required in order to accurately create and portray a character with a disability. Professional writers of television dramas were noted as a group that should consult more broadly with persons with disabilities when creating stories involving characters with disabilities or disability-related storylines/themes.

Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities – News Programming

There was a strong level of concern expressed by respondents about the portrayal of persons with disabilities in news programming. Perspectives generally revolved around (i) an overall lack of coverage of disability issues by television news, (ii)

types of coverage that focus on the disability rather than the person and (iii) the use of inappropriate language when referring to persons with disabilities in news programming.

Among perspectives about portrayal in news programming, use of inappropriate or insensitive language received the most comments. Many respondents indicated that use of language such as “suffering from” or “confined to a wheelchair” contributes to negative stereotypes and perpetuates myths about persons with disabilities.

Negative social attitudes were once again cited as a key barrier to positive or more accurate portrayal of persons with disabilities in news programming. However, many respondents suggested that more role models, such as on-air personalities with disabilities and employees with disabilities in newsrooms, would positively influence social and workplace attitudes.

A number of respondents once again cited concerns with the education sector, for failing to guide students with disabilities towards careers in broadcast journalism.

Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

The research first explored barriers to *participation* in the workforce generally. These were perceived as: (i) a lack of knowledge about workplace accommodation on the part of employers, (ii) an overestimation about the costs of accommodation by employers, (iii) a sense that employees with disabilities are a burden rather than an asset, and (iv) myths and misinformation about persons with disabilities that carry into the workplace, such as beliefs that persons with disabilities are unable to perform to the level or standard of able-bodied employees.

Many broadcaster respondents indicated that their industry offers excellent prospects for employing persons with disabilities, but recognized that issues and barriers must be managed. For example, several broadcasters stated that a lack of experience with co-workers who have disabilities could cause uncertainty about hiring persons with disabilities into an extremely busy work environment.

A number of Study respondents raised the unique attributes of the broadcaster workplace, where older buildings pose difficulties in accommodation. In addition, the multi-location nature of broadcasting and production operations was noted as

especially challenging for employees with disabilities given a lack of accessible transportation in major urban centers.

The independent production sector was perceived by respondents from the broadcasting industry and the disability community to be resistant to implementing accommodations for persons with disabilities.

The education sector was cited as a key external barrier to participation in the broadcasting industry, in that the sector does not seem to recognize, promote and/or understand the viability of careers in broadcasting for students with disabilities. A lack of communication and outreach between and among educators, the disability community and broadcasters was raised a number of times by respondents as an area requiring some focus when developing initiatives.

Considerations for a Broadcaster Toolkit

There is a general belief cited by many Study respondents that the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming creates a number of business opportunities for broadcasters, including a market of persons with disabilities and their families, friends and caregiver; achieving a competitive edge by tapping into creative resources of a more diverse talent pool; and benefiting all employees through accommodation measures.

Given the perspective that “diversity is good business”, and the prospects of positive influence on social attitudes through advancements in presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming, respondents identified a number of tools or initiatives for consideration by broadcasters.

The predominant focus was on considerations for communication and outreach, especially between the broadcasting industry and the disability community. Other suggestions targeted partnerships with the education sector, measures for the independent production sector, programming initiatives such as Public Service Announcements by broadcasters and cable-style local programming to be produced and presented by persons with disabilities.

Best Practices

Research findings on Best Practices on presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming identified a number of initiatives in the U.K. through the Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network, and in the U.S. through the California-based Media Access Office. Canadian broadcasters report initiatives regarding persons with disabilities in their annual returns (i.e. annual reporting) to the CRTC, and several Canadian broadcasters have developed education and human resource initiatives that focus on inclusion of persons with disabilities.

***The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons
with Disabilities in Television***

***A Research Report Presented to the
Canadian Association of Broadcasters***

Final Report – August 2005

Part I: Introduction and Background

A) Introduction

CONNECTUS Consulting Inc. (CONNECTUS) is pleased to present the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) with our Research Report on *The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming* (the Study).

Over the past several months we have, with the assistance and support of the CAB and its Steering Committee overseeing this work, undertaken a range of consultations and background research with the following objectives:

- Through broad consultations, identify key issues and barriers concerning presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming;
- Identify relevant Best Practices, both internationally and in Canada, which may be of value to Canadian broadcasters in their inclusiveness practices going forward; and
- Outline those tools and initiatives as considerations for Canadian television broadcasters in their efforts to advance the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in their industry.

In order to present our findings in as detailed a fashion as possible, we have organized our Report in the following manner:

Part I: Introduction and Background

- Introduction to the Study and Objectives
- Study Description and Methodologies
- Methodology Notes
- Definitions

Part II: An Overview of Persons with Disabilities in Canada

- Statistical profile of persons with disabilities, using the most recent numbers available from Statistics Canada and Social Development Canada
- A brief summary of available data on employment of persons with disabilities in Canadian broadcasting

Part III: Research Findings

- A detailed description and analysis of findings from qualitative research on the presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.

Part IV: Considerations for a Broadcaster Toolkit

- The tools and initiatives derived through consultations and research, and recommended for consideration by broadcasters.

We have attached four appendices to our Report:

Appendix A: A Summary of International and Canadian Best Practices

Appendix B: Organizations/Individuals Consulted

Appendix C: Stakeholder Forum Report

Appendix D: Other Issues Raised/Future Research

B) Study Description and Methodologies

This Study was designed as a qualitative investigation and analysis of issues and barriers respecting the presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming. In consultation with the CAB Steering Committee, it was determined at an early stage that quantitative assessment of televisual presence and related content analysis – i.e. counting/estimating the number of persons with disabilities on-screen and analyzing their roles – would not be required for the Study, given the very low numbers of persons with disabilities on-screen.

In addition, accurately quantifying the number of persons with disabilities on-screen would be extremely difficult, as analysis of programming might not capture persons with less visible or invisible disabilities, such as those with learning disabilities or disease-related disabilities.

The Study was also designed on the principle of *inclusiveness*, in that the direction of the Study would be fundamentally guided through consultation with the Canadian disability community. To this end, the Study was based on the following qualitative methodologies:

- *Extensive consultations* through one-on-one interviews and discussion with representatives from disability non-government organizations (disability NGOs), persons with disabilities within the broadcasting industry, government officials, senior managers in the broadcasting industry and representatives from the Canadian production sector.

A total of 56 people representing 45 disability NGOs, broadcasters, production associations, performers, producers and government officials were interviewed between May 31, 2005 and July 31, 2005. Respondents were from British Columbia, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec and all provinces in Atlantic Canada. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes, depending on the number of people participating in any single consultation. While a full list is provided in Appendix B of this Report, the breakdown of consultations is as follows:

- 23 disability NGOs
 - 11 broadcasters
 - 8 industry-related organizations/producers (including producer associations, writers' and directors' guilds and performer unions)
 - 2 employees/performers with disabilities
 - 1 government department
- *A Stakeholder Forum*, which brought together 20 disability NGOs, broadcasters, performers and producers in a day-long facilitated discussion of issues, barriers and tools/initiatives.

The Stakeholder Forum was held in Toronto on July 15, 2005 when one-on-one consultations and Best Practices research were almost complete. An additional 16 individuals from government and the broadcasting industry attended the Forum as observers, including members of the CAB Steering Committee of broadcasters overseeing the project, members of the CAB Outreach Committee of persons with disabilities serving as an advisory group to the Study, and two officials from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

The Stakeholder Forum was initiated as an alternative to holding cross-country focus groups. This is because (i) the CAB had previously conducted a series of consultations in the preparation of its *Action Plan to Examine Issues Concerning the Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming* (submitted to the CRTC in August 2004), and (ii) one-on-one consultations as described above would be comprehensive and inclusive enough to negate the need for additional focus groups.

In our research planning, the Forum was envisioned as a larger type of focus group, through which preliminary findings would be filtered and broader discussions would take place.

While findings from the Stakeholder Forum are integrated into Part III on *Research Findings* below, we have attached a stand-alone summary of the session as Appendix C of our Report.

- *Best Practices* research and analysis, focused on broadcasting industry initiatives in the U.K. and the U.S. and related industry initiatives in Canada.

Our summary of Best Practices is attached as Appendix A of our Report.

Beyond those qualitative measures outlined above, we carried out additional secondary research as required, including the compilations of recent statistical profiles of persons with disabilities in Canada.

Certain issues identified in the course of consultations were beyond the scope of the Study. These included: assistive technologies such as described video and closed captioning for television viewing by persons with sensory disabilities; advertising; radio; concerns regarding the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC); and public broadcasting. These issues are summarized in Appendix D.

A Note on Our Methodological Approach

Given its qualitative research design, this Study is based on perceptions and opinions of those interviewed, as well as on the views expressed by participants at the July 15, 2005 Stakeholder Forum. While studies of this nature are inherently subjective, both the numbers and types of consultations that took place with disability NGOs and broadcasting companies were more than sufficient to derive a series of comprehensive findings.

Moreover, the qualitative approach to the Study has yielded a very rich foundation of information upon which additional work and initiatives can be undertaken.

Definitions

For purposes of the Study, we based our research on the following definitions:

- *Persons with disabilities* as referenced throughout the Study include individuals with sensory (hearing, vision, speech), mobility, learning, psychological and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities. In this way, both “visible” and “invisible” disabilities, as well as persons with acquired or multiple disabilities were included in the Study.
- *Disability NGO* refers to a Non-government Organization representing a disability or cross-disability group. A *consumer-driven* Disability NGO is an organization run by and for persons with disabilities. A *service* Disability NGO is one that provides particular services to, but is not run by persons with disabilities.
- *Designated group* refers to the four population groups identified by Canadian Employment Equity legislation and policy: women, visible minorities, Aboriginal Canadians and persons with disabilities.
- *Presence* refers to the on-screen presence of a person with a disability, e.g. a performer, journalist, newsreader, or subject of a news story or public affairs program.
- *Portrayal* refers to the manner in which persons with disabilities are depicted through characterization, i.e. the role or attributes of a character with a disability and the manner in which this role is presented on-screen.
- *Participation* primarily refers to employment in the broadcasting industry and/or related industries such as production or performing, whether on-screen or behind the scenes. Consulting or advising on programming and appearing on-screen as subject matter experts for news stories are other forms of participation. However, the predominant reference on participation is to employment in the industry.
- *Television Programming* refers to a very broad range of programming available to Canadians, whether dramatic, news/public affairs, sports, variety or children’s programming, whether it is Canadian or non-Canadian in origin. We anticipated that many respondents would identify non-Canadian programs as those programs that included persons with disabilities in on-screen roles.

Since there was no quantitative research and analysis associated with the Study, the research team believed that programming referenced by respondents from any television broadcasting source would potentially provide relevant information for Canadian broadcasters.

In each interview, the research team identified the CAB as the association representing Canada's private broadcasters, and provided examples of networks, stations and specialty services to further explain this category of the industry to respondents. Consequently, respondents provided very few comments about public broadcasting in Canada, e.g. CBC/SRC, TV Ontario, Télé-Québec.

Part II: Persons with Disabilities in Canada Today

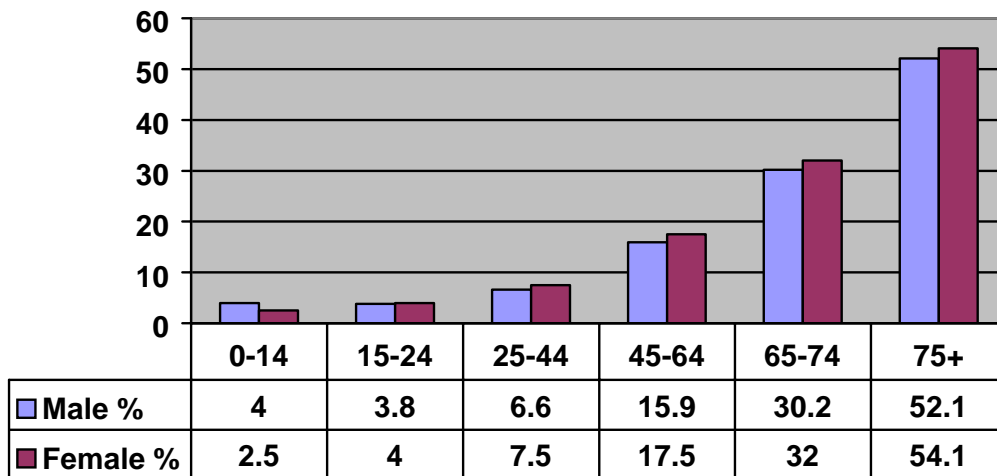
Population Overview

Statistics Canada defines “disability” as a condition – physical or mental – or a health problem that restricts an individual’s ability to perform everyday activities such as working, attending school, travelling, or performing daily domestic tasks.

While the data outlined below represent the official numbers from Statistics Canada, it is generally agreed that the total number of persons with disabilities in Canadian society today is much larger. This is due in part to the self-identification factor in the reporting of a disability, where individuals may not consider themselves as “disabled”. In other instances, a person with a disability may not wish to disclose this to an employer, perhaps fearing consequences for their employment status or future career.

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) undertaken by the federal government in 2001 identifies 3.6 million Canadians as living with a disability. While seniors (age 65 and over) have the highest *rate* of disability, it is working-age adults (age 16 to 64) that comprise the largest *group of persons* with disabilities.

Chart 1: Disability Rate by Age and Sex (2001)¹



(Age Groups and Percentages)

Beyond this overall perspective of persons with disabilities in Canada:

- 31% of Aboriginal adults have a disability, more than 1.5 times the non-Aboriginal population
- Women are generally more likely than men to have a disability
- 2 million adult Canadians with disabilities require assistive devices and aids, with roughly 67 percent having all assistive needs met;
- Mobility, agility and pain are the most common types of disabilities in Canada, with hearing disabilities next; and
- Some 2.8 million Canadians are caregivers to family members or a friend with a disability or long-term health condition.

¹ Adapted from Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2001; www.sdc.gc.ca provides the entire report. The survey is to be replicated and updated following the 2006 national census.

Key Indicators of Well-being²

With respect to key indicators of well-being, persons with disabilities fall below the general population on measurements of education, employment and income.

For example, younger Canadians with disabilities are about one-half as likely as those without disabilities to complete university.

Just over 51 percent of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 54 are employed, compared to nearly 83 percent of those without disabilities. In addition, roughly 43 percent of persons with disabilities are out of the labour force, compared to 12.5 percent of able-bodied persons in this age group.

Moreover, beyond higher rates of unemployment, persons with disabilities encounter significant underemployment, in large part as a result of attitudes that undervalue their skills and abilities.³

However, where accommodations have been made, persons with disabilities have clearly demonstrated success in education and work.

Key Barriers to Participation and Activity⁴

An increasing number of persons with disabilities identify social, political and environmental factors in assessing barriers to education, employment, income and leisure/recreational pursuits. We asked all respondents (with and without disabilities) for their perceptions about the main barriers for persons with disabilities in Canada today. Key barriers cited include:

- *Attitudes* held by Canadians that permeate and create barriers within all areas of Canadian society, including education and the workplace. Prevalent among attitudes is the perception that persons with disabilities are incapable of performing (in school, on the job) at a level that meets or exceeds those without disabilities. There is a general sense that the public misunderstands persons with disabilities, and what life with a disability is like. This is linked to a misperception on the part of employers that accommodating persons with

² The data in this section is adapted from “Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2004 – Main Report”, available at http://www.sdc.gc.ca/en/gateways/nav/top_nav/program/odi.shtml.

³ From “Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2004 – Main Report” as cited in Footnote 2, and from a consultation with the Office of Disability Issues, Social Development Canada.

⁴ This section is based on (i) findings from the consultations undertaken for this Study, (ii) “Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2004” as noted in Footnote 3, and (iii) the *CAB Action Plan to Examine Issues Concerning the Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming Programming (August 2004)*.

disabilities in the workplace is expensive and that persons with disabilities are a “burden” in the workplace.

- *Poverty* and related socio-economic barriers, stemming in part from high unemployment and underemployment rates, as well as non-participation in the workforce among persons with disabilities.
- Lack of *access* in a general sense, but especially access to information (for example, in multiple formats), to supports of various types, to jobs and physical access to buildings, shops, etc.
- Lack of *accommodation* for persons with disabilities through a range of settings such as workplaces and schools, which can include physical accommodation through wider doorways and hallways, to adaptive technologies such as special software for using computers, to on-site interpretation for the Deaf, deafened and/or hard of hearing.
- Accessible *transportation* systems and the impact that a lack of transportation can have on availability and choice of school, employment and personal pursuits.
- *Stigmatization and stereotyping* of persons with disabilities, where individuals are viewed as either the objects of pity and depicted as having the same attributes and characteristics no matter what the disability may be, or as “heroically overcoming” a disability.
- *Marginalization* resulting from all of the above factors, where persons with disabilities are rendered less visible in everyday life – and consequently, in the media.

As the reported research findings below indicate, many of these issues and barriers are perceived by stakeholders as part of the challenge that persons with disabilities encounter in presence, portrayal and participation in television programming.

Part III: Research Findings on Presence, Portrayal and Participation

The following three sections comprise the reporting of our findings on presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.

In each section, core findings are presented together with supporting quotations acquired from both consultations and the Stakeholder Forum. Quotations are verbatim, and identified by the person's type of organization and/or role (i.e. NGO Representative, Broadcaster, Industry-related Organization, Employee/Performer). Several NGO Representatives and government officials consulted for the Study had previous experience in broadcasting and/or performing; this is noted where warranted. In all cases, individual attribution of quotes was withheld in order to generate frank discussion in all consultations.

In addition to the reporting of perspectives on presence, portrayal and participation, we also report on barriers that are perceived by respondents as relevant to issues of presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming, i.e. the "why" of the issue.

Responses reveal that, although commitment and effort are required on the part of both broadcasters and the disability community to improve the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming, important advances have already been made. There was wide consensus on issues and barriers, between the disability community and the broadcasting industry, and consistently across the regions of Canada.

A) Presence of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

We aren't on television. We are vastly underrepresented.
(NGO Representative)

There is definitely a lack of representation of persons with disabilities on-screen. (Broadcaster)

There are hardly any numbers to count. (Employee/Performer)

Almost without exception, respondents in consultations and participants at the Stakeholder Forum agree – whether from the disability community, the broadcasting industry, or industry-related organizations – that persons with disabilities have an extremely low presence on television programming of any description.

Compounding this perception is a sense that persons with disabilities lag far behind the three other designated groups (i.e. women, visible minorities and Aboriginal Peoples) in terms of on-screen presence.

We are well behind all other designated groups...women, [ethnic or racial] minorities, Aboriginal people with APTN; they are all

far more in evidence than people with disabilities. (NGO Representative)

Most stations have representatives from the other diversity groups...but there is one remaining group that television has to say, "Wait a minute. Why aren't they there, on-air?" Well, why not? (Broadcaster)

No one blinks an eye at seeing a person of colour on television. (NGO Representative)

No one would care if Ian Hanomansing took over from Peter Mansbridge. But someone with a disability? No way. (Broadcaster)

The last quote above points to the widely held perspective that persons with disabilities are vastly underrepresented in news and public affairs programming as newsreaders, journalists, assignment reporters and in other roles.

There's David Onley (Citytv), and Craig Oliver (CTV) and Patrick Watson (formerly CBC) come to mind. But other than that? (Broadcaster, multiple mentions of the same individuals)

Chantal Petitclerc is well known as an on-air personality in Quebec. (NGO Representative, multiple mentions of the same individual)

There is also a sense among many respondents that the very low presence of persons with disabilities on-screen is disproportionate to their presence in the general population, contrary to the other three designated groups.

Given that we are 15 percent of the population...we are proportionately not there. The Paralympics is probably the only exception. (NGO Representative)

However, despite the general agreement that the on-screen presence of persons with disabilities remains low, there is a sense among some in the disability community that presence has somewhat improved, and may continue to do so. Much of this was attributed to the inclusion of a small number of primary and secondary characters with disabilities on popular dramatic programming.

[Presence] is still low, but my sense is that things are improving...the double amputee on "CSI", and the lead character on "CSI" is losing his hearing..." (NGO)

Representative; multiple mentions of the program by other respondents from all sectors)

The lead character in “Sue Thomas F.B. Eye” is Deaf.
(NGO Representative; multiple mentions of the program)

There are some recent shows like “Degrassi” and “Joan of Arcadia” [that include secondary characters with disabilities].
(NGO Representative; multiple mentions of the programs)

“The West Wing” has Marlee Matlin [Deaf actor] on sometimes, and she’s using an interpreter.” (NGO Representatives; multiple mentions of the program)

“Blind Justice” has a lead character who is blind, as an acquired disability. (NGO Representative; multiple mentions of the program)

As a secondary impression, a number of respondents noted that on-screen presence tends to be limited to *visible* disabilities, such as individuals in wheelchairs. Respondents suggested that *invisible* disabilities – such as those associated with learning or mental illness – are even more rare in programming of any category. Most comments on invisible disabilities were related to portrayal of persons with disabilities, and are outlined below.

Finally, a number of respondents indicated that the presence of persons with disabilities as background performers in dramatic programming is also very low. Many respondents viewed this as an important element in reducing the marginalization of persons with disabilities in society more generally, where persons in wheelchairs or using white canes/guide dogs would be integrated into background scenes.

With cultural diversity, people complain they are only in the background. Persons with disabilities want to be in the background [as well as in the foreground]. (NGO Representative)

Rarely if ever are we interviewed on the street, by a reporter. We just aren’t seen as having opinions. (NGO Representative)

This points to a perception held by virtually all Study participants: television is a powerful medium that can influence social attitudes, including attitudes about persons with disabilities. Television is universally recognized as a medium that can make a significant contribution to advancing the acceptance of persons with disabilities in society through on-screen inclusion.

Perceived Barriers to On-screen Presence

Discussions about on-screen presence invariably drew additional perceptions about why there are few persons with disabilities on screen. Many respondents identified barriers to on-screen presence, which were filtered and discussed at the Stakeholder Forum (see below).

Perceived barriers ranged from the very broad...

Negative attitudes permeate the whole industry.
(Employee/Performer)

The system is broken, it's not working for the disabled.
(Employee/Performer)

... to much more specific encounters with physical barriers...

Access to auditions is impossible. You can't get in the door with a wheelchair. (NGO Representative with performing experience)

...to comments and concerns about whether there are enough performers with disabilities (i.e. developed as opposed to raw talent) that can appear on-screen.

The talent pool just doesn't seem that large, very few performers [with disabilities] come forward. (Broadcaster)

Hard to find talent. (Broadcaster)

There may not be such a big talent pool, but – unconsciously or consciously – producers may not be looking. (Industry-related Organization)

Several respondents perceived that television is a visual medium that promotes and thrives on beauty and image. As such, persons with disabilities may encounter a “beauty barrier” to on-screen presence.

Blind people look different. Unless we look right, we won't get on [television]. (NGO Representative)

We aren't pretty enough [that's what people think]. (NGO Representative)

Others suggested that environmental factors, long days and location shooting pose unexpected barriers for persons with disabilities, many of whom can already have health problems.

The studio lights were so bright...it was impossible for me to see.
(NGO Representative with performing experience)

It can be a stamina thing. Ten-hour shoots, it can be too much.
(Government Official with performing experience)

Some sets and studios are simply not accessible. You either can't get transportation to them, or you can't get around in them once you're there. (NGO Representative with broadcasting experience)

Respondents perceived and provided extensive comment on two barriers that are viewed as the most daunting, and the most prevalent: characteristics of the independent production sector and historical practices in the education sector.

The independent production sector is a vital part of the Canadian programming infrastructure, and production companies are extremely important partners for Canadian broadcasters. This is because independent production companies conceive and create programming for purchase by broadcasters.

The independent production sector consequently involves key creative personnel in the development of dramatic roles and their assignment to performers, including writers, casting directors, producers and directors, among others. Given their importance in the conception and creation of programming, a good deal of decision-making power about roles/performance opportunities for persons with disabilities resides within the independent production community.

Many respondents interviewed for the Study were aware of the important role played by the independent production industry in the creation of programming. The overall perception – from those consulted within the disability community and the broadcasting industry – is that there is significant resistance from the independent production sector with respect to creating and producing programming that includes persons with disabilities. This perception extended to both the development of characters and the use of performers with disabilities (for acting jobs overall).

The independent producers seem really resistant to roles for and/or performers with disabilities...I don't know why this is.
(Broadcaster)

Producers say, "It costs money [to include a person with a disability]". That's total bullshit. (Employee/Performer)

You know, at the level of the producer, the casting director, the writer, there's so little awareness. Agents don't consider it either, it's just viewed as a burden." (NGO Representative)

It takes courage to cast someone in a wheelchair.
(NGO Representative)

Compounding these general perceptions of resistance from the independent production sector is the sense that a lack of inclusion may stem from a lack of persons with disabilities currently working at the creative level in programming production.

In other words, there is a perception that there are very few professionals with disabilities working as writers or directors, or filling other key creative roles, in the production sector today. Such individuals could potentially serve as role models in the industry for younger Canadians with disabilities.

The infrastructure breaks down at an early age, doesn't it? Kids make decisions about writing, acting, being in a newsroom or making drama early. (NGO Representative)

Kids with disabilities don't see us on the career path. The education sector has not been too successful at this.
(Broadcaster)

[Career] counselors really need to expand their view of what we can do. (NGO Representative)

Many respondents identified the education sector as presenting significant barriers to on-screen presence of persons with disabilities, primarily because students with disabilities are not encouraged to pursue production or broadcasting as viable careers. This may stem from a "fear factor" on the part of educators, who may be reluctant to direct students with disabilities to an industry that seems remote or inaccessible, and points to a need to "educate the educators" about the broadcasting industry and opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Respondents also noted that issues with the education sector may be a reflection of negative public attitudes that permeate the system, reaching to parents who may not encourage careers in these fields, and resulting in a lack of communication or outreach among educators, the disability community and broadcasters.

Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about On-screen Presence

Stakeholder Forum participants recognized the reality that on-screen presence among persons with disabilities is very low, and recommended a range of tools, initiatives and strategies for consideration in addressing this issue (outlined in Part IV below).

Participants at the Forum focused their discussion about presence on a number of barriers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities on-screen, identifying the following as especially critical:

- A lack of roles for persons with disabilities coming out of the production sector.
- Few on-screen role models (for dramatic programming) influencing a lack of interest in performing at an early age.
- A lack of support from the education sector for on-screen professions.
- A lack of training opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Participants were far less inclined to view “beauty and image” as a barrier to on-screen inclusion. In fact, contrary to the views of many respondents in the one-on-one consultations, Forum participants were largely dismissive of the notion that the physical appearance of persons with disabilities and/or their use of assistive devices work as barriers to on-screen inclusion.

Participants at the Stakeholder Forum also discussed the business case for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities on-screen, particularly in terms of the impact that greater on-screen presence could potentially have on broadcaster (and advertiser) ability to reach a wider market of persons with disabilities, their families, friends and/or caregivers. The business case for inclusion is discussed further in Part IV of this Report.

B) Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

In this section of the Report, we present and discuss our findings on *portrayal*, i.e. the manner in which persons with disabilities are perceived as depicted in television programming.

We have divided our discussion on portrayal into two sections. The first section deals with portrayal of persons with disabilities in programming genres such as drama, comedy, variety or children's shows. The second section examines the portrayal of persons with disabilities in news, sports and public affairs programming.

Once again, as was the case with the presentation of findings about on-screen presence above, the discussion to follow is based on the perceptions and views of respondents through one-on-one consultations and of participants at the Stakeholder Forum.

Portrayal in Dramatic Programming

Not unlike the discussion of *presence* above, perceptions of portrayal from respondents during one-on-one consultations and participants at the Stakeholder Forum range from the very negative to the more positive. But there is little doubt that issues associated with portrayal are top of mind for many in the disability community.

Given the relatively low on-screen presence of persons with disabilities, many respondents expressed their views with the stated recognition that the available number of portrayals is small. With this in mind, the following themes emerged as central to perceptions on portrayal:

- *Stereotyping*, where characters with disabilities are portrayed in ways that perpetuate myths about life with a disability or feature inaccurate information about disabilities, or overemphasize such qualities of life as helplessness or misery;
- *Victimization*, where characters with disabilities are portrayed as vulnerable and weak, often as the victims of crime or other wrongdoing;
- *Appropriation of voice*, which refers to able-bodied performers portraying persons with disabilities or the creation of roles for characters with disabilities by non-disabled writers; and
- *Inclusions and non-marginalization*, where characters with disabilities are portrayed for their non-disabled attributes first, e.g. as professionals, as friends, as parents, as opposed to *disabled* professionals, *disabled* friends, or *disabled* parents.

As a general observation, we noted that these themes of portrayal emerged in a consensus fashion, in that these perspectives are held by representatives from disability NGOs, the broadcasting industry, industry-related associations and employees/performers with disabilities.

Of all perspectives received during one-on-one consultations, *stereotyping* and perpetuating myths associated with disabilities received the most comment. Many respondents were of the view that stereotyping was the prevailing problem of persons with disabilities.

Stereotyping negatively contributes to self-identification and self-image. And there is too much stereotyping of people with disabilities on television. (NGO Representative)

You still get all kinds of stereotypes, and the focus is always on the disability. The media needs to start portraying this as normal. (NGO Representative)

We're still the "Hunchback of Notre Dame" – a menace, or a monster. (NGO Representative)

Broadcasters have an obligation to promote the positive portrayals, but they don't. It's very rare. (NGO Representative)

Only physical disabilities seem to get any attention. Less visible disabilities don't get on TV. (NGO Representative)

Victimization of persons with disabilities was often viewed as among the more negative of stereotyped portrayals on television.

We're still too often the victim. (NGO Representative)

[A character with a disability] is usually someone to be pitied, a victim of some type. (NGO Representative)

Two minutes into "Law & Order", we're mugged or murdered. (Employee/Performer)

You are either a hero or a victim. You don't see a disabled lawyer in a court scene. (Industry-related Organization)

Many perspectives relating to stereotyped portrayals identified specific disabilities, often those that are less visible and therefore, according to several respondents, more “fear-inducing”. This fear becomes perpetuated through dramatic representation.

Propensity for violence by mentally ill is perpetuated...the idea that the mentally ill are dangerous. (NGO Representative)

You often see criminality associated with invisible disabilities, like learning disabilities. (NGO Representative)

With respect to *appropriation of voice*, a number of strong opinions emerged about the use of able-bodied performers in roles portraying persons with disabilities. In many comments, concerns about realistic portrayal, taking jobs away from performers with disabilities and professional ethics emerged.

More often than not, you still see actors without disabilities playing the role [of a person with a disability]. (NGO Representative)

It drives me nuts when they use able-bodied people to portray us. They are missing out on a realistic portrayal. (NGO Representative)

To the trained eye, you can tell. “That guy doesn’t have a disability”. (NGO Representative)

Using able-bodied actors...well there’s no more brown paint and pretending to be Aboriginal. (Government Official)

While the above represents the predominant view about the portrayal of characters with disabilities by able-bodied performers, a contrary view was also voiced.

Acting is a profession, so they should use professional actors regardless of whether they are disabled or not. Playing a person with a disability would be acting, wouldn’t it? (NGO Representative)

Many respondents expressed contrary views to the perspectives on portrayal outlined above, where improvements in recent programming were noted in much the same fashion as observations about *presence* outlined above. Many of these comments identified the more positive efforts to *promote inclusion and non-marginalization* by focusing on attributes of a character other than that character's disability.

On balance – it's getting better, but the stereotyping still prevails.
(NGO Representative)

Some are positive and some are not. It's positive to the extent that these characters are there at all, at least there seems to be progress overall. (Broadcaster)

There seems to be less stereotyping now...some characters are better. But they are still few and far between. (NGO Representative)

I've noticed an improvement of late. It seems more rare to see a negative portrayal. (NGO Representative)

Many respondents identified specific programs that portray persons with disabilities more accurately, or with a more positive brush. In many cases, these programs include characters with disabilities who are portrayed by performers with disabilities.

"CSI" and "Law & Order" do a better job, more accurately portray people with learning disabilities. (NGO Representative)

Overall it seems to be improving, even less visible disabilities are being portrayed, like the fellow losing his hearing on "CSI".
(Broadcaster)

"Sue Thomas" is a good role model for the Deaf community...shows the Deaf can do the same things as able-bodied people. (NGO Representative)

It's positive to have Marlee Matlin on "The West Wing"... (her character) is a respected professional...she uses an interpreter, too. (NGO Representative)

Occasional storylines were mentioned as more accurately portraying life with a disability...

An episode of ER where an artist going blind committed suicide at the end. You know what? That kind of thing happens. That wasn't negative. (NGO Representative)

O.K. so the stories on "Blind Justice" might be straining reality, and the guy's not really blind, but it's not a bad job of showing life with a disability and what you go through. (NGO Representative)

...while others were viewed as less accurate.

Oh, please. I've been blind since birth and I've never touched anyone's face in my entire life. (NGO Representative)

Finally, a number of respondents voiced a view about portrayals as a work in progress, in a more balanced sense.

Portrayals do seem more positive lately, with "Sue Thomas" and the doctor on "CSI". These are positive role models. But you still get some victims, on reality shows like "Extreme Makeover", where they renovate homes for poor people and the families always seem to have a child with a disability.
(Broadcaster)

Respondents also emphasized that given the very low numbers of persons with disabilities on-screen, it is important that portrayals are fair, accurate and complete.

Perceived Barriers to Accurate/Positive Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities

Many respondents expressed their views about *why* stereotypical or negative portrayals of persons with disabilities continue – even when there is evidence of progress and improvement. Unlike perspectives that were voiced about barriers to presence, there were just two predominant views about barriers to positive depiction.

Without question, the number one barrier to more progress on portrayals was viewed as public attitudes that carry over into the depiction of persons with disabilities in programming. Such attitudes – which include the reproduction of

myths and misinformation about disabilities and life with a disability – are viewed by many Study participants as permeating the entire infrastructure of production and broadcasting.

...still a surprise to see a person with a disability in a role. It's an extension of public attitudes. (NGO Representative)

The public misunderstands us. Maybe it's not surprising this carries over to television. (NGO Representative)

Attitudinal barriers equate with stereotyping. (Industry-related Organization)

We're supposed to be pitied, be victims...at least, that's the prevailing public attitude. (Employee/Performer)

Some respondents linked this barrier to the manner in which barriers for other designated groups have weakened or dissolved through time.

It's like the early days when blacks on television were stereotyped. That's much better now. Getting past the disability is tough, it takes time. There's still tokenism. (Industry-related Organization)

Reminiscent of women on television, when they were just stereotyped. It's come a long way. (Broadcaster)

The second barrier to improving the depiction of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming is believed to reside within the production sector itself. Many respondents believe that there is a general lack of effort made on consultation and research – particularly among professional writers of television programming – that would result in more accurate depictions.

Writers and producers take the easy route in portraying disability. They don't consult...more writers need to contribute more effort. (Broadcaster)

There's just no consultation. If you are talking about Aboriginals, then talk to Aboriginals...same thing goes for persons with disabilities. (Industry-related Organization)

Very few guidelines are in place...producers tend to have a cast that looks like the community they are trying to produce for, to

reflect that audience and stay relevant [i.e. a lack of inclusion in defining their audience]. (Industry-related Organization)

I've never been consulted about creating a role. We could help.
(NGO Representative)

The last quote above is one response to a question asked of respondents from disability NGOs and other persons with disabilities consulted for the Study. From our consultations, two NGO representatives (out of 45 individuals from 22 organizations) had been consulted by a writer or producer about accurately depicting a person with a disability.

Other respondents indicated that broadcasters themselves could do a better job at insisting on accurate portrayals from third-party productions, but encounter their own challenges in doing so.

We're better at making roles more positive, but don't have enough experience. We're not nearly as good at figuring how to integrate [persons with disabilities] into storylines.
(Broadcaster)

There's an effort to be sensitive. But when you buy co-productions you don't see a lot [of good portrayals] coming from other countries. (Broadcaster)

Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about Portrayal

Participants at the Stakeholder Forum discussed portrayal issues and barriers at length, largely confirming the views of respondents from consultations but with a different order of emphasis. Key issues were viewed as:

- Appropriation of voice through (i) the creation of roles with disabilities by non-disabled writers and (ii) the performance of characters with disabilities by non-disabled performers; and
- Stereotyping of characters with disabilities.

In particular, participants at the Stakeholder Forum voiced their concern about the creation of roles with disabilities by non-disabled writers, where disability culture and the reality of living with a disability are viewed as inaccurately portrayed.

Participants at the Stakeholder Forum also engaged in a lengthy discussion about appropriation of voice, concerning the performance of characters with disabilities by able-bodied actors. The range of discussion reflected the findings from the consultations, where there is disagreement among the disability community/ individuals with disabilities and broadcasters about the importance or relevance of this issue. The range of individual perspectives included:

- Able-bodied performers should *never* portray characters with disabilities as they are fundamentally unable to accurately convey life with a disability;
- “Doctors do not play television doctors, police officers do not play television police officers”; therefore, characters with disabilities can be portrayed by any skilled actor;
- However, a man does not play a woman in a role, *unless* that’s what the role calls for.
- Finally, acting is a profession, and the best professionals should be assigned roles, whether those people have disabilities or not, for any role. At the same time, performers with disabilities should have the opportunity to play any role.

With respect to discussions about stereotyping, many participants at the Stakeholder Forum were also of the view that myths about disabilities/living with a disability carry into portrayals. These myths range from notions that all persons with disabilities are victims and are somehow to be pitied, to patterns of speech/use of language, and body language. In addition, the myth that persons with disabilities are “suffering” and that disabilities are “conditions” to be “heroically overcome” still find their way into on-screen portrayals.

While the above considerations generally dominated discussions about portrayal at the Stakeholder Forum, participants also acknowledged during roundtable discussion that – as is the case with presence – some progress is being made on depiction through characterizations that focus on the person/skills as opposed to the character’s disability.

Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in News Programming

As noted above in reporting findings on *presence* of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming, respondents perceive a very low number of on-air personalities with disabilities in news and public affairs programming.

While most respondents tended to view this lack of presence in a pragmatic fashion, and linked to a lack of initiative on the part of the education system in neglecting to direct students with disabilities to careers in broadcast journalism, there was a great deal more concern expressed by respondents about the *portrayal* of persons with disabilities in news programming.

Many respondents commented not only on national news coverage, but on local coverage as well. In many instances, concerns about portrayal in television news programming were tied to local media coverage more generally, e.g. radio, print and television. With this in mind, the following themes emerged as central to respondent perceptions of portrayal in news and public affairs programming:

- *Overall lack of coverage* of disability issues by television news outlets;
- *Types of coverage* that marginalizes or stereotypes persons with disabilities;
- *Use of inappropriate language* when referring to persons with disabilities in news stories, which in turn perpetuates myths about persons with disabilities as suffering from an affliction; and
- *A lack of public affairs programming and documentaries* dealing with disability issues and persons with disabilities.

There was a near-unanimous perspective voiced by respondents about the general lack of coverage of disability issues by television news.

Our issues have difficulty getting airtime and ink. (NGO Representative)

Coverage of some issues, like getting autistic kids back to their parents in Ontario, has been good. But other coverage has been poor, inadequate. (Broadcaster)

I'm not Superwoman, I need some assistance and can't do everything independently. But the focus should not be me, the focus should be on not being able to vote alone. It's the issue that needs to be portrayed. (NGO Representative)

When disability issues and persons with disabilities are reported by television news, there is a sense that coverage is skewed in a manner that marginalizes or stereotypes persons with disabilities.

There's a lack of normalization in news...only the exceptional stories or people are the focus. We don't want to be amazing. We want to be normal. (NGO Representative)

In general, it's tragedy, victimization, or criminality. (Government Official)

[In news coverage] there is still too much focus on the victim, rather than the individual. Focus on the person. (Broadcaster)

It's either tragedy or heroism. Or it's the hyper-accomplished, like Rick Hansen or Chantal Petitclerc. (Government Official)

Of course there is more interest by the media in celebrities with disabilities, the Rick Hansens and Chantal Petitclercs. That's good, but there are too few stories about the average person with a disability in the local community. (NGO Representative)

Top of mind for many respondents was the insensitivity of portrayals of persons with disabilities on television news programming, as indicated through the kind of language used in stories. The central concern expressed is that the use of insensitive language perpetuates stereotyping of persons with disabilities as somehow afflicted with a condition that victimizes and medicalizes their status.

There is a problem with language about people with disabilities in news. "Overcoming a disability" and the like. It plays out as a negative thing. (NGO Representative)

It's all about the medical model, the "suffering". Coverage seems to have regressed. (Industry-related Organization)

The biggest problem is the negative language, "confined", "suffering". They covered Tracy [Latimer] in such a dehumanizing way. (NGO Representative)

News is a big area of concern for us, it reflects society...and the news category does have some insensitive portrayals. (Broadcaster)

There is still troubling terminology – "the disabled", "the elderly". (NGO Representative)

News coverage is far more knowledgeable and appropriate than ever before. Paralympics coverage is excellent. But language could still improve, avoid things like “confined to a wheelchair”.
(NGO Representative)

Despite these concerns, respondents did not indicate any initiatives that might be helpful in addressing in appropriate language, in either one-on-one consultations or at the Stakeholder Forum.

Other respondents expressed their perspectives on the types of disabilities covered by television news...

As for learning disabilities, they are rarely dealt with (in news programming) at all. (NGO Representative)

...while others indicated advances in some areas...

Canadian news is not nearly as bad as the U.S. in linking mental illness to crime, but still needs to work on avoiding sensationalizing mental illness. (NGO Representative)

...and others recognized there is a need for progress in news portrayals.

There is more sensitivity to issues, points of view are more useful, but there is a ways to go. (Broadcaster)

Beyond coverage of disability issues/persons with disabilities in news coverage, a number of respondents shared their perspectives on other types of public affairs programming and sports. Many indicated a need for programming that focuses more deeply on disability culture.

CBC had “Moving On”...apart from that, there has been no extended coverage of disabilities or life with a disability.
(NGO Representative, multiple mentions of this program)

I think [a Canadian network] had a documentary about disabilities that was excellent...couldn't there be more of this?
(NGO Representative)

We have everyday lives, we're more normal than anyone realizes. We have sex lives, families. This could be represented.
(NGO Representative)

And once again, a sense of some progress being made.

[One of our productions] looked at sex and disability, really a good job at normalizing. (Broadcaster)

Perceived Barriers to Accurate/Positive Portrayal of Persons with Disabilities in News Programming

Respondents identified a number of barriers to better portrayal of persons with disabilities in news programming, ranging from the influence of public attitudes to a lack of on-air talent.

News portrayal is improving, but I find it incredible that there are not more newscasters on TV, for example those with physical disabilities. (Broadcaster)

[Public] attitudes permeate the news. (Employee/Performer)

With respect to perceived issues concerning the use of inappropriate language, one respondent suggested the following:

A new generation of reporter has slipped back to the old language. They have a long way to go in showing respect and learning about us. (NGO Representative)

Several respondents identified a lack of persons with disabilities as on-air and newsroom role models that would ostensibly encourage better portrayals and more on-air presence overall.

[Having more] persons with disabilities in the newsroom is a definite help. (Broadcaster)

You need more role models, more people with disabilities in the newsroom – there are too few now. (Broadcaster)

A number of respondents flagged concerns with the education sector in failing to guide students with disabilities toward careers in broadcast journalism. (This barrier was perceived as a predominant factor in *participation* in the broadcasting industry by persons with disabilities as a whole, and is examined in detail in Part C below.) As one example of this perspective:

There's no outreach, to schools or communities. Until some visionaries in the industry commit to change, nothing will happen. (Broadcaster)

Finally, several broadcaster respondents identified one particular area that could work to include and accurately portray Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming news: through the use of subject matter experts with disabilities, as expert commentators on news stories (i.e. not just as commentators on disability issues). This was not raised as a perspective by any respondents with disabilities or any representatives from disability NGOs. As noted by one broadcaster,

We have a hard time identifying subject matter experts [with disabilities] to come in for [comment/analysis of] news stories...but we'd like to know who they are. (Broadcaster)

Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about Portrayal in News Programming

Stakeholder Forum participants expressed a single perspective and a related barrier in discussions concerning portrayal of persons with disabilities in news programming: sensitivity issues in coverage, including the use of inappropriate language and a lack of understanding about disability issues.

Participants also identified the lack of employees with disabilities in newsrooms as a key barrier to advancing portrayals of persons with disabilities in news programming.

With respect to the use of inappropriate language, a Forum participant offered an opinion that this may be due to systemic barriers for persons with disabilities, and less about insensitivity of a new generation of journalist.

There was also some debate about the use of appropriate language, with reference to the correct terminology to apply to Deaf persons. One perspective argues that references should be made to the person where the disability is secondary (e.g. a Canadian who is Deaf) while another perspective argues that primacy should be given to the disability in terminology (e.g. a Deaf Canadian). This difference of opinion underpins the importance of recognizing that cultural differences can exist within the disability community.

As noted above, there was no consensus on ways of dealing with terminology and appropriate language.

Lack of coverage of disability issues in news programming was also cited as an issue by participants at the Forum, but did not receive further discussion.

C) Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

In this section of our Report, we present our findings on the *participation* of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming, primarily from the perspective of obtaining and retaining employment in the industry. We first briefly revisit issues of participation in the workforce generally, followed by a discussion of perspectives raised by respondents about participation in the broadcasting industry more specifically.

This is followed by some reporting on barriers to participation in broadcasting as perceived by respondents during consultations, and a summary of views about participation by those attending the Stakeholder Forum.

Participation by Persons with Disabilities in the Workforce Generally

In the course of one-on-one consultations, each respondent was asked for their perspective on issues and barriers respecting participation in the workforce and the workplace, in general. This was done in order to ascertain the experiences of respondents in their own employment and workplaces, and to enrich the subsequent discussion about participation in the broadcasting industry.

Respondents viewed the central issues of participation in the workforce as:

- A lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of employers about workplace accommodation (i.e. measures taken to accommodate employees with disabilities, such as automated doors, wider doorways, accessible washrooms, technology aids, lighting or other environmental factors).

There's a lack of knowledge about technology, both on the part of disabled people and on the part of corporations. It's likely the biggest barrier behind attitudes in terms of workforce participation. (NGO Representative)

Advances in technology really level the playing field (for accommodation). (NGO Representative)

- An overestimation about the costs of accommodation on the part of employers (i.e. a belief on the part of employers that accommodating employees with disabilities is costly) and misinformation about the true costs of accommodation.

The costs of accommodation are simply overestimated. It's amazing how easy accommodation can be...and we can help.
(NGO Representative)

There is a definite belief that the cost of accommodation is high. But remember, changes benefit all workers like curb cuts for strollers...employers should see this as an investment in all their people. (NGO Representative)

Wouldn't you rather pay \$1100 for some software, and get in return an employee who will bring far greater value to your company? (NGO Representative)

- A general sense on the part of employers that employees with disabilities are a burden, rather than an asset, and will not be productive.

No question, we are viewed as a burden, something that an employer does not want to take on. With minimal assistance, we're as productive as the next guy. (NGO Representative)

Attitudes are the core problem. There is an expectation that we can't work. (NGO Representative)

- A general “fear factor” in the workplace, with reluctance among employees with disabilities to self-identify for fear of losing their jobs or hindering their careers, and a reluctance among employers to sanction or fire employees with disabilities for fear of repercussions.

My vision was going...I kept looking for assignments that would keep me out of taxis and in the office. I had no idea whether I should tell [my employer] or not. (NGO Representative with experience in broadcasting)

- Pervasive myths about the abilities of persons with disabilities, and the notion that a physical disability somehow equates with intellectual deficiencies or shortcomings, and the impact of this on employer attitudes.

Persons with disabilities have to prove themselves, that their disability will not prevent them from doing the job. (NGO Representative)

There's a negative notion of prospects [for children with disabilities], and as a result, a lower push by parents. (NGO Representative)

A lot of people with disabilities were never asked, "What do you want to do when you grow up?" (NGO Representative)

The education system could definitely do more on this front...kids with disabilities are not told, "You can go on to do bigger and better things". (NGO Representative)

Perspectives on Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

Not surprisingly, a number of the above noted issues and barriers about participation in the workforce generally were viewed by respondents as factors concerning participation by Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming. Many respondents raised additional issues and barriers with respect to employment in the broadcasting industry, where less than 2 percent of the workforce is comprised of persons with disabilities.⁵

Respondents included their perspectives on:

- *Opportunities* in the broadcasting industry for persons with disabilities.
- *Attitudes* of employers specifically referencing broadcasters;
- Issues relating to *accommodation* in the broadcaster workplace;
- Issues relating to *education and training*, and the general lack of support from the education system in promoting broadcasting as a career path for students with disabilities; and
- The importance of *communication and outreach* between the disability community and broadcasters.

As a general observation, we encountered a very positive range of perspectives about participation in the broadcasting industry overall, and recorded a willingness on the part of both the disability community and broadcasters to address the issues and barriers inhibiting greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in the industry.

⁵ As reported by Women in Film and Television in "*Frame Work: Employment in Canadian Screen-based Media, A National Profile*" (WIFT: 2004).

There is little to report in the way of hesitation or reluctance about this on the part of any respondents.

To this end, a number of respondents indicated that the broadcasting industry presents excellent *opportunities* for persons with disabilities.

Broadcasting is not that different from other industries, it's a great industry for persons with disabilities, really diverse, creative, welcoming. (Broadcaster)

There are plenty of jobs for people with sensory disabilities in broadcasting...chase producers [locating and securing interviews for news broadcasts] sit all day. (Employee/Performer)

There are some design considerations, but some folks with physical disabilities would be perfect for some kinds of jobs in broadcasting. (Broadcaster)

Let's get on with it. (Broadcaster)

While enthusiasm for advancing participating in the broadcasting industry is high among many respondents, there is also a recognition that there are issues to deal with and barriers to break down.

Some perspectives on issues and barriers identified those that are more *internal* to the broadcasting industry. For example, with respect to *attitudes*, many broadcasters likened the “fear factor” associated with the recruiting and hiring of persons with disabilities to similar attitudes once held about the recruiting and hiring of women in the broadcasting industry.

This parallels the struggles of women to get access to jobs in the industry, with the same arguments: “No qualified people.” (Broadcaster)

It's like the original perception of women in the workplace. They'll slow you down. Not so. (Broadcaster)

It's just like working with anyone else. (Broadcaster)

A number of broadcasters identified the daily realities of the broadcasting industry as creating hesitation in recruiting and hiring persons with disabilities.

Managers are doing four jobs at once...and see an employee with a disability as an added burden. It's a sensitizing issue, we have to show it's a benefit, not a burden. (Broadcaster, multiple mentions of the issue)

There's a fear among some managers, of not knowing how to interact with a disabled person. (Broadcaster)

Many respondents identified the internal issue of *accommodation* as an important concern about participation in the broadcasting industry by persons with disabilities, and one which highlights the relative uniqueness of the broadcaster workplace environment.

Of particular emphasis on the part of broadcaster respondents was the physical age of some buildings, and other factors relating to physical accommodation for wheelchairs.

We're in an older building...there is no elevator to the cafeteria, we only just got a ramp outside. For us, accommodation is more expensive. (Broadcaster, multiple mentions of the issue)

We don't own our building, we lease space. It can be doubly tough to accommodate as a result. (Broadcaster)

Some studios are just not accessible. Getting from place to place can be tough. But the physical barriers are the worst. (NGO Representative with experience in broadcasting)

The multi-location nature of broadcasting operations and production operations was also viewed as related to a broader social barrier for persons with disabilities, i.e. transportation.

Physical transportation from location to location can be an inhibitor. (NGO Representative)

I would run up such a taxi bill! There was no other way to get around. (NGO Representative with broadcasting experience)

Some respondents saw a relationship between the glamour of the broadcasting industry and the presumption of barriers to entry on the part of younger people with disabilities.

The culture of television, the image of television, that's a huge inhibitor for a person with a disability. (NGO Representative)

Several respondents drew a connection between a lack of on-air role models in television news, and a lack of interest among younger people with disabilities in participating in the industry whether on-air or behind the camera.

You do need more role models, like more reporters with disabilities. Just don't have them do only disability stories. That's like having women reporters do only women's issues. (NGO Representative, multiple mentions)

It's a Catch-22...if you don't see yourself, you won't want to go there. (Government Official)

Issues of accommodation were also expressed regarding the production sector.

The independent producers are very disability-unfriendly, their set-ups [for accommodating persons with disabilities] are not good, that's the reality of independent production. (Broadcaster)

There are physical barriers to casting facilities, you can't get in the door. (Industry-related Organization)

Others saw the opportunity deriving from accommodation as part of the business case for diversity.

Broadcasters need to assess the investment of accommodation versus the cost of not accommodating. (Government Official)

A number of other issues and barriers to participation in the broadcasting industry reflected on those that are *external* to the industry. For example, a significant number of respondents identified the *education sector* as shouldering a great deal of responsibility for failing to promote (or understand) broadcasting as viable careers for students with disabilities.

Counselors really need to expand their view of what people can do. Not every profession is open to the able-bodied. But for the disabled: most kids will write themselves off before they would even try for a media job. (NGO Representative)

There is not a great track record on the education side for

getting people into broadcasting...for the Deaf, there are graphics, animation, there might be some great ideas out there.
(NGO Representative)

Others suggested that it might be time to look for alternatives to the education system to help persons with disabilities acquire skills necessary for job in broadcasting.

The education sector has not been that successful in directing students with disabilities to careers in broadcasting...maybe the [disability] groups should do it. (Broadcaster)

There are on-going challenges to identifying qualified candidates with disabilities and accessing the resource pool. I wonder if the disability communities could screen in advance?
(Broadcaster)

A number of respondents indicated that educational institutions themselves, especially in the post-secondary environment, have done a poor job of accommodation, and therefore in attracting promising students with disabilities to their programs.

Look at [a community college in British Columbia]...three-quarters of their classes are in buildings that are inaccessible.
(NGO Representative)

Schools, media arts and journalism programs need to do a better job of accommodating. I may not be able to operate a camera, but I would make a heck of an interviewer. That should be taken into account. (NGO Representative)

Colleges and universities could do a much better job at accommodation. (NGO Representative)

The lack of on-going training in the production sector was also raised.

Training in production is not well crafted or well organized, it's ad hoc at best. The production environment is just not set up for disabled people. (Industry-related Organization)

Consultations with respondents about participation in the industry often highlighted the need for more and better *communication and outreach* among the education sector, the broadcasting and production sector, and the disability

community. Broadcasters and representatives from disability NGOs in particular raised the need for greater communication between them.

There is not enough outreach by broadcasters into the community [of persons with disabilities]...we don't really know what opportunities there are. (NGO Representative)

We have to do a better job of connecting with broadcasters. We haven't done so well at this, yet. (NGO Representative)

There are too many NGOs...we wonder if there could be one-stop shopping, something like WorkAble which provided training, counseling, employees, all in one place. (Broadcaster)

Disability groups do seem very scattered, who do we talk to? It's tough for one employee in my company to talk to 20 groups. (Broadcaster)

We don't know where to start. Tell us where to start. (Broadcaster)

Issues of communication were also raised with respect to outreach with the education sector...

You need to step back, get into the schools and I mean elementary schools and get to them early. (Broadcaster)

Employers in the broadcasting industry need more willingness to actively promote opportunities to persons with disabilities, using career and placement centres in colleges and universities. (NGO Representative)

...and on the part of the production sector.

There is very little encouragement by the guilds (writing, directing)...there is no outreach and it tends to be extremely competitive. (Industry-related Organization)

Stakeholder Forum – Participant Views about Participation in Television Programming

Participants at the Stakeholder Forum identified a number of issues concerning participation in television programming, most notably about employment in the broadcasting industry. Participants in particular emphasized:

- A lack of communication and outreach between the disability community and the broadcasting industry;
- Accommodation issues in general, e.g. employers overestimating the costs involved in accommodation;
- The perceived inaccessibility of the broadcasting industry, e.g. a perception on the part of young people with disabilities that the industry is large, complex and difficult to gain entry into;
- A lack of knowledge on the part of persons with disabilities about available jobs in the industry;
- Attitudinal issues, such as a view that employees with disabilities are a burden, not an asset;
- Difficulties encountered in entering and staying in the workforce by persons with “multiple barriers”, such as an accent and a disability; and
- Reluctance or the “fear factor” among employees to disclose disabilities and among employers to sanction or fire.

Among the above issues, participants noted the lack of communication and outreach between the disability community and broadcasters as a predominant factor. Many participants pointed to the Stakeholder Forum itself as among the first opportunities these sectors have had to communicate with each other about the issues, and begin some discussion on ways to move forward.

A table summarizing Study findings on issues, barriers and opportunities respecting the presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming is presented on the following page.

**Table 1 – Summary of Findings
on the Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons
with Disabilities in Television Programming**

Category	Key Issues	Key Barriers	Comments	Opportunities
Presence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Very low on-screen presence ➤ Perceived to lag behind other designated groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative social attitudes ➤ “Fear factor” ➤ Environmental factors ➤ Ind. production sector ➤ Education system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recent progress perceived in some primetime drama with primary or secondary characters with disabilities. ➤ Small numbers make accurate portrayals imperative 	<p>There is a general belief that moving forward on inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming creates a number of opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attracting a market of persons with disabilities/families/friends/caregivers ➤ Competitive edge by tapping into all creative resources ➤ Accommodation measures can benefit all employees <p>Broadcasting industry is seen as a potential agent of change that can influence social attitudes.</p>
Portrayal - Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stereotyping ➤ Victimization ➤ Appropriation of Voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative social attitudes carry into portrayal ➤ Ind. production/creators viewed as disability-unfriendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Creation and/or portrayal of roles with disabilities by able-bodied seen by the disability community as a continuing problem. 	
Portrayal – News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Little coverage of issues ➤ Focus is on the disability ➤ Inappropriate language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Negative social attitudes ➤ Few role models ➤ Education system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Issues in news programming are seen as more critical than in dramatic programming. 	
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Social attitudes carry into workplaces ➤ Access to buildings/facilities/studios ➤ Accommodation costs overestimated by employers ➤ Employees with disabilities viewed as burden ➤ Education and training are lacking; education system does little to promote careers in broadcasting ➤ Belief that communication/outreach is lacking. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Developing initiatives to build communication and outreach between broadcasters/ disability community is viewed as a key starting point by most Study participants. 	

Part IV: Considerations for a Broadcaster Toolkit

Respondents in one-on-one consultations and participants at the Stakeholder Forum were asked for their perspectives on potential tools or initiatives that might be considered in the advancement of presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.

As a general observation about the findings presented in this part of the Report, we note that all individuals, companies and organizations consulted for the Study agreed that tools or initiatives could be developed for any of the following reasons:

- Diversity is good business, and advancing the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming can capture untapped markets when considering the population of persons with disabilities in Canada plus caregivers approaching six million people – and is much larger when families and friends are included.
- More inclusion of persons with disabilities in a broadcasting company’s workforce potentially provides a competitive edge by ensuring that all of society’s available creative resources are tapped.
- Accommodations for employees with disabilities benefit all employees, whether automatic doors, ramps or other modifications for access.
- As a designated group, persons with disabilities lags well behind women, visible minorities and Aboriginal Peoples; greater inclusion will work to “level the playing field”.
- Television broadcasting can have a significant influence on public attitudes about persons with disabilities, through advances in their presence, portrayal and participation.

Respondents to the one-on-one consultations and participants at the Stakeholder Forum suggested a variety of tools and initiatives for consideration by broadcasters, along the following themes:

- Communication and Outreach
- Human Resource and Accommodation Initiatives by Broadcasters and/or Disability NGOs
- Initiatives Targeting Education Sector Partnerships
- Programming Initiatives by Broadcasters
- Initiatives Targeting the Production Sector

With respect to Initiatives Targeting Education Sector Partnerships and Initiatives Targeting the Production Sector, only a few NGO Representatives addressed these, even though education and production practices were raised as significant barriers to inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.

Many NGO Representatives indicated that with few resources and the need to drive other initiatives, focusing the attention of educators on broadcasting careers for students with disabilities might be a task best left to broadcasters.

As for the production sector, many NGO representatives indicated they did not feel well informed enough about what the production sector could or could not do to improve presence, portrayal and participation. Once again, NGO Representatives indicated a strong willingness to work with broadcasters on any initiatives addressing the production sector, but do not feel equipped to lead on this front.

Considerations for Communication and Outreach

Given a prevailing sense that the disability community and broadcasters need to “get to know each other better”, the predominant suggestions for a broadcaster toolkit focused on “getting started”.

- Organize an initial roundtable bringing the disability community and the broadcasting industry together for a discussion of issues and potential tools (with many Study participants agreeing that the Stakeholder Forum addressed this, but suggesting more needs to be done along this line with a wider range of broadcasters).
- Focus on the development of outreach initiatives through partnerships between the disability community and broadcasters, at the local, regional and national levels, in order to develop Best Practices and drive greater inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.
- Establish committees comprised of community-based disability groups and local broadcasters, as a kind of advisory body/editorial board for increasing presence and monitoring portrayal of persons with disabilities in news programming.
- Create a committee/delegation of disability NGOs to meet with CEOs and other senior executives in the broadcasting industry, in order to introduce and discuss issues and barriers at the highest possible levels of industry management.

- Engage broadcasters in disability culture and issues by inviting participation in and/or coverage of disability events, such as Deaf Days, National Access Awareness Week and other opportunities.
- Create a network of consumer-driven disability NGOs to assist broadcasters with advancing inclusion. Such a network would provide information, training, centralized job postings and other services of value to the industry and the disability community.

Considerations for Human Resource and Accommodation Initiatives by Broadcasters and/or Disability NGOs

- Introduce training seminars for employees of broadcasting companies, to raise awareness about disability issues and promote positive workplace relationships. Include “when to disclose a disability” information to capture employees with invisible disabilities.
- Conduct training seminars for employees with disabilities to assist with their orientation and integration into the workplace.
- Develop guidelines and industry standards on presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming, for both broadcasters and the independent production community. Ensure the participation of the disability community in developing standards.
- Create a central hub or clearinghouse that would identify subject matter experts and other resources; the Canadian Association of Broadcasters could potentially do this, but a network of consumer-driven disability NGOs may be a more viable host.
- Partner with broadcasters or ensure participation of disability NGOs in job and career fairs.
- Create bursaries for students with disabilities to assist with broadcast media studies.
- Use workplace accommodation professionals or NGO-based expertise to assist broadcasters with accommodation planning and implementation.
- Include accommodation as a line item when broadcasters undertake their annual budget planning process. Seek assistance from NGOs about estimating costs of accommodation going forward.

- Create an “accommodation fund” through the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (i.e. a fund of contributions from all broadcasters which is then distributed by the CAB to members requiring assistance to fund accommodation measures in their workplaces).
- Hire persons with disabilities from local or national groups to provide consulting services on a range of inclusion issues.
- Place a list of consumer-driven disability NGOs (i.e. those run by and for persons with disabilities, as opposed to service organizations) on the CAB website as an information resource for broadcasters.

Considerations for Initiatives Targeting Education Sector Partnerships

- Focus on improving the role and contribution of the education sector in identifying broadcasting as a potential career path for students with disabilities. Activities could include providing broadcasting employees with disabilities to speak with students, teachers, staff and/or administrations.
- Develop and use internships, mentorships, co-op placements and other means to direct students with disabilities to potential careers in the broadcasting industry.
- Develop broadcaster scholarships for persons with disabilities in order to make broadcasting training and experience more accessible.

Considerations for Initiatives Targeting the Production Sector

- Scriptwriters should work with persons with disabilities to ensure correct portrayal. The production community in general should take steps to consult with persons with disabilities and disability NGOs.
- Develop measures to target performers with disabilities, including training opportunities, casting calls and other initiatives to increase the pool of talent.

Considerations for Programming Initiatives by Broadcasters

- In collaboration with disability groups, develop Public Service Announcements to promote the value and importance of persons with disabilities in Canadian society as a means of influencing negative public attitudes about disability issues.

- Develop a cable-style local program that would be produced and presented by persons with disabilities, to increase presence and create a grassroots media training opportunity for persons with disabilities at the local level.

Additional Strategies Identified by Stakeholder Forum Participants

- Advance anti-ableism education (i.e. education and training that target negative and discriminatory behaviour directed at persons with disabilities, in much the same manner as anti-racism education).
- Increase the number of persons with disabilities on screen, using this as a catalyst for broader change.
- Create a Canadian version of the U.S.-based Media Access Office.⁶
- Introduce a strategy to address broader attitudinal change and measure progress.
- Adapt selected Best Practices from the international level to avoid re-inventing the wheel.

Stakeholder Forum participants further noted that broadcasters are part of one, larger, connected industry. Full engagement of all partners within that infrastructure, including the independent production sector, is required in order to advance inclusion and effect change.

⁶ The Media Access Office is described in Appendix A on Best Practices. It is part of the California Governor's Committee on Employment for Persons with Disabilities (Inc.) and is funded by the state's Employment Development Department and by a not-for-profit "Friends of the Committee" corporation that engages in traditional types of fundraising activities.

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Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)

- 2004 Public Notice 2004-4 *Introduction to Broadcasting Decisions 2004-6 to 2004-27 renewing the licences of 22 specialty services* www.crtc.gc.ca

Office of Disability Issues – Social Development Canada

- 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey www.sdc.gc.ca
- 2004 *Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*
www.sdc.gc.ca/en/gateways/nav/top_nav/program/odi.shtml

Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television

- 2004 *Reflecting Canadians: Best Practices for Cultural Diversity in Private Television* Final Report www.cab-acr.ca

Appendix A: International and Canadian Best Practices

As part of the qualitative research process, we reviewed Best Practices with a primary focus on broadcaster industry activities with communities of persons with disabilities in the United Kingdom and the United States, and industry-related activities in Canada.

Initiatives in The United Kingdom

1) Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network (BCIDN)

- Brings together the UK's major broadcasters and others in the creative industries to explore and address disability as it relates to the media industry.
- Started under the Employers' Forum on Disability – all BCIDN members are Forum members (see below for a description of the Forum)
- Enables members to recruit and retain persons with disabilities and to promote and share best practices.

Membership

- BBC, BSkyB, Channel 4, COI, Discovery Networks Europe, Five, the UK Film Council, ITV (merged Carlton and Granada), PACT, Skillset and Turner Broadcasting System.
- Associates included a small group of persons with disabilities with considerable media experience to help BCIDN Network better understand disability and the industry.

Manifesto 2002

In May 2002 the member organizations of the BCIDN committed to:

- Increase the presence of persons with disabilities on air and on screen
- Increase the number of persons with disabilities in all areas of the workforce
- Increase access to services on and off air
- Ensure access to all buildings
- Produce and make public a Board-endorsed Action Plan, which details how these Key Commitments will be implemented.

Based on Manifesto 2002, member companies undertake the following activities and initiatives regarding presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming:

a) BBC

BBC is the acknowledged industry leader in disability-related initiatives in the U.K.

Increase Presence and Improve Portrayal

- Develop and deliver training for journalists, program creators and commissioners to increase presence of persons with disabilities on-air and to ensure that portrayal of disability is non-stereotypical.
- Providing training for 600 Broadcast Journalists across the U.K.; taking steps to integrate training for journalist internally and within professional journalism schools.
- BBC Sport Appointed a Disability Sports Coordinator, launched a new section at its website, continues to broadcast and develop new program and talent covering disability sport.
- Regional programming covering disability issues and presenters with disabilities.
- Encouraging producers to include persons with disabilities through a range of activities, including the Diversity Database (includes 1000+ potential contributors with disabilities).
- Advising program creators on disability awareness and education through the BBC Diversity Centre, and through such initiatives as *The Production Handbook – A guide for programme makers to the Disability Discrimination Act Part 3*;
- Monitors the presence of disability on-screen annually.

Increase Participation

- Includes accommodation costs as a budget line item.
- Reviews recruitment practices to ensure accessibility of job opportunities for persons with disabilities.

- Undertakes annual disability audits.
- Provides disability-related training to HR personnel and managers.
- “Extend” offers approximately 40 work placement opportunities for persons with disabilities across the BBC annually.
- Developed the position of Access Technology Strategist, to ensure employees with disabilities have access to appropriate technology in their jobs, including procurement of computer software, providing helpdesk support, and adapting existing technology.
- Extending the disability production trainee program to offer five placements annually.
- Established central support systems for all disabled staff. Established a Disability Computer Group, a pan-BBC Access Unit and appointed a Disability Employment Advisor.

Other BBC Initiatives

- OUCH! A website operated by persons with disabilities for persons with disabilities, supported by BBC.
- The BBC and Disability, a booklet that outlines measures to address the portrayal of persons with disabilities in BBC programming, develop new talent, and explain the activities of Extend, the BBC Access Unit and the Access Technology Strategist.
- BBC/Channel 4 partnership to provide Talent Bursaries for over 20 actors with disabilities to develop their talent and to learn the craft of acting for television. Bursaries will be offered to over 20 actors.
- The Disability Writersroom, a weeklong residential workshop for writers with disabilities, selected through a competition.

BBC Programming Targets

- At least one regular disabled character with a disability in a returning drama series on BBC One; of every 100 background performers, two with performers with disabilities across all BBC One drama programming.
- Three factual and leisure shows on BBC One and BBC Two are to feature at least one contributor with a disability per series.
- Three game shows on BBC One and BBC Two are to feature a minimum of one contestant with a disability out of every 50 on each series.
- BBC Three to broadcast one drama or entertainment series that features a recurring character with a disability.

BBC Research Report: “Disabling Prejudice: Attitudes Towards Disability and Portrayal on Television” (2003)

- Undertaken with the Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Independent Television Commission; key findings included:
 - Accurate portrayals are a key concern for viewers with disabilities
 - Role models for young people with disabilities are key
 - The industry recognizes that disability, as a political concern, is not yet as advanced as issues of ethnicity or gender equality; senior management must lead change
 - Many broadcasting professionals recognize the creative potential of persons with disabilities.
- Report recommended the following focus:
 - Raising awareness and facilitating better relationships between the media and disability advocacy groups
 - Develop measures to address the talent pool of performers with disabilities
 - Encourage higher rates of employment of persons with disabilities in the industry
 - Training and education.

b) British Sky Broadcasting (BskyB)

Increase Presence

- Ensure all Producers are made aware of the details contained within “Adjusting the Picture” (A BCIDN/ITC publication – A producers guide to disability), and working work with the BCIDN and its associates to brief producers and those commissioning programmes.
- Promote the use of disabled actors, presenters, experts etc and will support the BCIDN in identifying effective methods of measuring on screen disabled presence.
- Represent persons with disabilities and disability issues in a supportive and responsible manner.
- Develop a dedicated Sky Disability Service Team that offers a one-stop shop for disabled people.

Increase Participation

- Creating a shared recruitment service that works to meet the recruitment needs of all hiring managers while providing a framework for selection and assessment.
- Provides coaching and guidance to managers on every aspect of recruitment, including how and where to advertise.
- Invites recruitment agencies to present their approach to disability and revised the selection criteria to include disability as part of the selection process for preferred suppliers.
- Upgrading HR processes and Systems capability to allow improved monitoring of disabled persons.
- Developing and implementing a Recruitment and Selection, requiring participation by all recruiting managers; focus is on practical assessment training and fair and equitable selection processes.
- Provides three work experience placements to young people with disabilities

c) Carlton Television

Increase Participation

- Developed and currently funds an Entry Point bursary for two 6-month traineeships for persons with disabilities in Regional Programmed Production.
- Sponsors the registration of 20 production personnel with disabilities on Productionbase.co.uk, a website directory for employers.
- Reviews recruitment procedures to ensure optimum reach and accessibility for all applicants with disabilities, e.g. increase font size on application forms, create alternate formats for application packages, inquire about any accommodations needed for attending an interview.

Awareness

- Integrating disability awareness training into core training modules for line managers through “Appreciating Difference” workshops.
- Established disability as a regular item at production meetings to raise and maintain awareness among program decision-makers.
- Includes regular reporting on portrayal and employment on agenda of production teams.
- Promotes a positive and consistent message on disability internally and externally, including an awareness campaign (“Changing Attitudes”)

Commitment

- Monitors disability portrayal across regional and network programming for regular reporting to the Boards of Broadcasting and Production Divisions

d) Channel 4

Channel 4 pursues a number of Best Practices relating to presence, recruitment and training – with much of this activity managed by a full time Disability Advisor.

Increase Presence

- Disability Advisor surveys disability inclusion in mainstream programming for the annual ITC report; works with commissioning editors and producers to achieve greater inclusion of persons with disabilities across all programming (including contributors, contestants, experts, presenters, actors, audience and interview subjects)
- Disability Advisor compiles clips providing examples of good practice, and forwards with a letter encouraging 25 producers to follow these examples; also provided to commissioning editors.
- “Four All” disability database website provides guidelines for Producers including advice on working with persons with disabilities, how to meet access needs, and how to hire sign language interpreters.

Increase Participation

- All job advertisements are issued to the widest possible audience.
- Plans industry recruitment events with disability advisors from other broadcasters.
- Hosts a Media Information Day to encourage Deaf or Deafened to view broadcasting as a potential career choice.
- Investigating feasibility and costs of having links from key disability web sites to Channel 4 Careers website.
- Makes relevant advertising available to “jobability.com” (website for persons with disabilities)
- Provides specialist trainers or use NGOs to meet training needs of employees with learning disabilities.
- Holds Deaf Awareness and Disability Awareness sessions

Training in Program Production

- Funds training of persons with disabilities in program production.
- Sponsors ten actors with disabilities on a pilot Bursary Access Scheme at the Actors Centre in London.

- These actors are provided with 12 months free membership at the Centre plus a fund to cover classes of their choice.
- At the end of this period, each creates a DVD of performances and attends a networking event with drama producers and casting agents.

e) Channel 5

Increase Presence

- Simple monitoring form created for post-production record keeping, and circulated all major production companies (i.e. collection of data for tracking on-screen presence and production)
- Encourages producers to include persons with disabilities in the full range of program genres, e.g. in studio audiences, interview subjects and experts.
- Supports the web-site productionbase.co.uk
- Circulate the BCIDN/ITC Producer's Guide "Adjusting the Picture" to all Channel 5 program makers.

Increase Participation

- Launched a graduate-level broadcast management trainee scheme for a young person with a disability.
- Reviews recruitment practices to ensure that job opportunities are advertised in publications for persons with disabilities.
- Assesses the level of employees with disabilities on an annual basis.
- Runs a disability workshop for staff involved in interviewing and selection and plans to run refresher sessions on a yearly basis.
- Consults with employees with disabilities about company policies and practices including accommodation practices.

f) Discovery Networks Europe

- Encourages persons with disabilities to apply for advertised positions.
- Facilitates disability diversity training to all manager-level staff
- Interviews all candidates with disability who meet minimum criteria
- Operates an internal “help-line”.
- Promotes disability issues through *Disclosure* and through *Newswire* (global daily electronic bulletin)
- Introduced a “Flexible Working Policy” to accommodate commitments outside the office.

g) U.K. Film Council

- Appointed “Access Matters” as Disability Advisor to work with the U.K. Film Council’s Board, staff and industry partners to raise awareness of disability issues and provide expert advice.
- Disability Advisor producing a comprehensive Diversity Strategy involving consultation with persons with disabilities and a timed implementation plan.
- Commissioned and completed an Accessibility Audit, a Policy and Procedures Audit, and a Website Audit, to “equality-proof” operations and address barriers.
- Raises awareness of disability issues in the whole industry through advocacy and influence; published a research report entitled *Cinema Access Technologies for People with Sensory Impairments*, including recommendations to improve access to cinemas for persons with disabilities.
- Shares information and collaborate with partners including members of the BDN on research regarding disability.
- Ensures that all funding criteria take account of disability issues and make awareness and consideration of these issues a condition of all funding.

- Undertakes further research on possible broadcast assistive devices for audience members with sensory disabilities.
- Includes accommodation costs as a budget line item.
- Provided Disability Awareness Training for U.K. Film Council members and staff.

h) Granada Media plc (the Group)

- Granada works primarily with the Deaf community in the U.K.

Increase Presence

- Extending existing monitoring of on screen ethnic participation to disability.
- Encourages producers working across all genres to include persons with disabilities in their programming by offering awareness training and ensuring access to “Adjusting the Picture”.
- Contributes towards an industry-wide database of performers/talent with disabilities.

Increase Participation

- Hired new Head of Resourcing to review all recruitment practices
- Designed a jobsite to ensure job opportunities reach a more diverse audience
- Audited all recruitment suppliers to ensure they demonstrate good practice on disability.
- Reviewed and re-designed the Recruitment and Selection training to include a specific section on disability.

Training

- Trained seven Deaf people as on-screen BSL (British Sign Language) interpreters.
- Training 12 Deaf people in new media skills.

- Training two Deaf technical operators; funding one Deaf staff through a two-year MA in Human Resource Management to move Deaf employees into senior management positions.
- Disability awareness training to Managers and Staff.
- Deaf awareness training for hearing staff and hearing awareness training for deaf staff.
- Trains “front of house” staff in dealing with members of the public with disabilities visiting facilities.
- Offers training schemes and work placement opportunities for disabled people.
- Offers courses for Audience Stewards including specific training on emergency procedures for those with a disability
- Launched a Disability Distance Learning exercise for 36 Managers and staff who have customer facing roles or recruitment responsibility.

Partnerships

- Continuing to build relationships with schools and colleges with local Deaf programs
- Continuing relationship with Disability Service Access to Work Scheme providing government funding to support employees with disabilities

Access

- Ensures that initiatives to create programming with both Deaf and hearing presenters and a Deaf interpreter are followed up.
- Continuing to develop Signpost as a centre of excellence in its provision of service for the Deaf and hard of hearing.
- Continuing to monitor and account for all input from disability groups.

j) PACT

Increasing Presence

- Engaging writers to create characters with disabilities in films, television drama series and serials, and entertainment programs as integral part of the story.
- Measures to ensure the integrated casting of actors with disabilities in roles for characters with disabilities and able-bodied roles.
- Measures to include persons with disabilities in studio audiences: space for wheelchair users, induction loops, interpreters, access for guide dogs.

Increasing Participation

- Recruiting persons with disabilities in production and technical roles.
- Providing work experience placements and training opportunities to trainees with disabilities.
- Contributing to the Disability Database in the recruitment of persons with disabilities.

j) Turner Broadcasting System Europe

- Training front-line staff in Disability Awareness.
- Incorporating disability into Recruitment and Selection training course.
- Creating two paid work placements for employees with disabilities in Network Operations Department.
- Creating a work shadow placement in News Division.
- Increasing advertising in disability-focused publications and newspapers to try to attract more disabled applicants.

2) *Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network (BCIDN) Publications:*

Disabled Talent

An e-leaflet that is designed to advise producers and directors about the various sources of disabled talent, and to guide persons with disabilities about how to make their skills and availability better known.

Handbook on Disability – A Practical Guide for Producers

Produced by BCIDN to help producers better cater for disabled people as program contributors and as members of studio audiences. Addresses issues that producers need to consider especially for people with visual or hearing impairments, or with mobility impairments.

Moving into the Spotlight

A short guide for casting directors, issued to U.K. Casting Directors.

Make a Difference – Ideas for including disabled people in broadcasting and film

A guide (published jointly by BCIDN and ITV) to highlight practical and realistic ways in which commissioners and program makers can work with persons with disabilities as colleagues, contributors and as members of the audience.

Adjusting the Picture – A Producer’s Guide to Disability

The most referenced guide, widely distributed and intended for program makers in all genres, including news, drama, light entertainment, children’s, public affairs and sports. (Jointly published by BCIDN and ITV.)

Four All

Website providing guidance for producers on finding and working with “disabled contributors”, including actors. Includes background on searching for disabled talent; financial support available through government; and legal issues.

The Employer's Forum on Disability

- Funded and managed by employers, focuses on disability in the workplace. The Forum has over 375 members, or companies/organizations employing 20% of the UK workforce.
- Works to maximize the business advantages of best practices on disability
- Provides access to specialist help on the Disability Discrimination Act and related legislation
- Provides regular bulletins on disability issues, simplifies access to agencies and services for members.
- Provides members with opportunities for networking/sharing Best Practices, regular events and conferences, and publications.

Other Initiatives of the Employers' Forum:

Business in the Community (BITC) Awards for Excellence 2004

British Sky Broadcasting's (BskyB) was presented with the Realizing Ability Award for its work in promoting understanding of disability issues and providing dedicated services for persons with disabilities.

The Knowledge – Disability Solutions for Employers

A “best-practice” reference kit highlighting the tools needed for an inclusive approach to employees with disabilities, and the benefits of taking an inclusive approach.

Disability Confident

A comprehensive interactive training package on disability for business developed by the Employers' Forum on Disabilities and Skill Boosters. It is an interactive multi-media e-learning resource to help managers and staff to become “disability confident”.

Online Briefings

Provides online briefings on disability for leading business advisors. These briefings examine the disability dimension in key areas such as employment, labour standards, human rights, customer relations and the digital divide.

The Disability Standard

A tool that enables organizations to assess their performance on disability as it affects risk management, customer care, employment, occupational health, premises and the built environment, IT systems, accessibility of goods and services and the impact of government policy. As many as 78 organizations have participated in the Disability Standard.

Initiatives in the United States

1) *The California Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities*

- The Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD) works to eliminate the barriers that preclude equal consideration for employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Committee members are volunteers comprised of decision makers and leaders from the private and public sectors with expertise in supporting and building systems that promote universal access, remove barriers to work and enable people with disabilities to gain independence and economic self-sufficiency.
- Major projects/awards include:
 - Annual Employer (Best Practices) Awards
 - California Business Leadership Network (CABLN)
 - Disability Awareness Education
 - Annual College Scholarships
 - Affiliated Mayor's Committees
- Provides quarterly business conferences where employers and professionals in the field of disability employment can network to increase employers' understanding of working with disabled employees.
- Offers "Windmills", a disability awareness training program together with other educational and informational resources to help dispel myths and stereotypes that hinder full inclusion of people with disabilities and can assist employers with all aspects of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities.

GCEPD Media Access Office

- Objective: actively promote the employment and accurate portrayal of persons with disabilities in all areas of the media and entertainment industry, ensuring that the industry recognizes people with disabilities as part of cultural diversity. Established in 1980.
- Funded by the State of California, and by a range of fund raising activities.
- Media Access Office services and programs include:
 - Casting Division: liaison for casting directors looking for actors with disabilities. Talent files include actors with visible and non-visible disabilities, union and non-union members and performers with and without agent representation.
 - Talent Development: including individual career development, reviewing and setting career goals and objectives, industry referrals, acting workshops, “business of the business” classes and low cost head shot sessions, resume clinics, and young performer + parent seminars.
 - Talent Agent Support: educating talent agents on how best to represent their clients with disabilities. Will advise on a young performer’s individual education program, focusing on vocational skills in the dramatic arts.
 - Project Development and Production Information: to answer questions relating to disability issues, current trends and political correctness, period piece information, questions pertaining to the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, and referrals to related organizations, products and services.
 - Community Education: provides speakers to address industry groups and the disability community.
 - “Media Access Awards – Celebrating Disability in the Entertainment Industry”
 - Recognition for media professionals, films, television shows, commercials, and other products in the media and entertainment industry for their accurate portrayal of people with disabilities.
 - Recognition is also given for employers employing and casting people with disabilities in the industry.

- Seven different awards, including:
 - Governor’s Award of Excellence, to an individual or organization in the media industry for promoting the awareness and dignity for people with disabilities.
 - Screen Actors Guild – Harold Russell Award, to a SAG member with a disability who has made a significant contribution to public awareness and understanding of people with disabilities through the media.
 - Casting Society of America Award, to a member who consistently casts roles based on ability, not disability.
 - Producers Guild Award, to a member dedicated to elimination of stereotypes and the integration of accurate portrayals and employment of persons with disabilities in the industry.

Scholarships include:

- Christopher Reeve Acting Scholarship
- Young Performers Acting Scholarship
- Norman G. Brooks Comedy Scholarship
- Ricardo Montalban/Nosotros Acting Scholarship
- KSA/Day Acting Scholarship

2) Tax Credits – State of California

- The State of California provides tax credits and deductions for employers including:
 - Work Opportunity Tax Credit – available to employers who hire individuals from certain target groups including persons with disabilities.
 - Disabled Access Credit – Helps small businesses cover the cost of making their businesses accessible.
 - Architectural Transportation Tax Deduction – Businesses may deduct up to \$15,000 for expenses incurred to remove physical, structural or transportation barriers.

3) California Business Leadership Network (CABLN)

- Extension of the nation-wide Business Leadership Network (USBLN) established in 1994 by the former President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; dedicated to more effectively employing persons with disabilities.
- Led by "Lead Companies" in their communities, the CABLN is an employer-to-employer network of small, medium and large companies that enables employers to share best practices, work collaboratively on common issues and effectively utilize community-based resources.
- Develops partnerships to support Best Practice initiatives in recruiting, accommodating and retaining employees with disabilities; develop awareness training packages and seminars for companies.

4) Non-traditional Casting Project

- Established in 1986 to address and seek solutions to the problems of racism and exclusion in film, television and theatre; now serves as an expert advocate and educational resource for full inclusion in theatre, film, television and related media.
- Current focus is to increase the participation of artists of colour and artists with disabilities in the industry: advocacy toward more inclusive standards and practices; consciousness raising and education, and specific programs through which producers, directors and casting directors can implement inclusion
- Initiatives include:
 - National Diversity Forum (online discussion forum)
 - Artist Files/Online (talent bank)
 - "Listening with an Open Eye" resource guide those employing actors with disabilities, focusing on Deaf actors
 - Consulting and Information Programs
 - Two national conferences on non-traditional casting and cultural diversity; nine regional conferences; 170 forums, panels and seminars with professional, community and educational institutions

5) CBS

CBS Diversity 2005-06 Talent Showcases

- In association with AFTRA, SAG and the California State Media Access Office, CBS sponsored its first talent showcase for performers with disabilities in Los Angeles.
- CBS Entertainment development executives and casting directors from the Network's primetime and daytime programs participated, as well as casting directors from production companies that work with CBS. (A showcase participant immediately landed a recurring role CSI: NY.)

CBS Diversity Events

- Partnered with Non-Traditional Casting Project to host a two-part workshop with industry executives at CBS Headquarters in New York. The workshops provided television casting directors with important background and information on specific disabilities and on working with performers with disabilities.

6) SAG/AFTRA

- AFTRA partners with network television casting offices to produce showcases featuring promising actors with disabilities, as part of a continuing inclusion initiative.
- Forum on Assistive Technology available to Increase Jobs for Performers with Disabilities, focus on new technologies can be used to increase employment opportunities for actors, writers and broadcasters with disabilities.

Initiatives in Canada⁷

1) Alliance of Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA)

- All collective bargaining agreements include affirmative action measures supporting performers with disabilities.
- Producers need to liaise with and inform ACTRA if they wish to cast an able-bodied person in a role with a disability

⁷ Initiatives by Canadian broadcasters are included in their corporate diversity plans and reported in their annual returns to the CRTC.

- Has re-launched “Mainstream Now”, showcasing actors with disabilities
- ACTRA.ca “Face to Face” search engine enables talent searches for performers with disabilities

2) ACTRA Toronto

- ACTRA Toronto’s National Diversity Committee has set up a Task Force on Accessibility to encourage more work opportunities for performers with disabilities

3) Famous Players Theatres

- Developed a Public Service Announcement (PSA) in partnership with Canadian Paraplegic Association promoting positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities, to be shown on all screens across Canada.

4) Greater Vancouver Business Leadership Network

- Employer-driven coalition of business, government, community organizations; designed to improve employment opportunities benefiting business and persons with disabilities
- Members include Canadian Broadcasters
- Focus on development of awareness training, seminars, recruitment and retention information and packages

Appendix B: Individuals/Organizations Consulted

Disability Non-government Organizations

Faye Joudrey
Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia

Rob Sleath
Advocates for Sight Impaired Canadians

Larry Pempeit
Alberta Paraplegic Association

John Rae, Kim Kilpatrick, Judy Smith
Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians

Teresa Penafiel
Association multi-éthnique pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées

Serge Brassard
Association québécoise des étudiants ayant des incapacités au postsecondaire

Stephanie Cadieux
B.C. Paraplegic Association

Jihan Abbas
Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres

Evelyne Gounetenzi
Canadian Association of the Deaf

Harold Schnellert
Canadian Council of the Blind

Susan Main
Canadian Hearing Society

Jim Sanders
Canadian National Institute for the Blind

Valerie Ravary
Canadian Paraplegic Association

Mary Ennis
Coalition of Persons with Disabilities (Newfoundland and Labrador)

Chloe Serradori
Confédération des personnes handicapées du Québec

Laurie Beachell
Council of Canadians with Disabilities

Diane Sullivan
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

Frank Smith
National Educational Association of Disabled Students

Constance McNight
National Network on Mental Health

Noel Browne, Nick Nash, Lannie Woodbine
Newfoundland and Labrador Paraplegic Association

Barry Schmidl
PEI Council of the Disabled

Shelley Rattai, Paul Young
People First of Canada

Véronique Vézina
Regroupement des aveugles et ambylopes du Québec

Broadcasters

Kim Carter
Alliance Atlantis

Jean-Pierre Laurendeau
Astral Media Inc.

Dawn Fell
Bell Globemedia Inc.

Sarah Crawford, Mary Kramolc
CHUM Limited

Ruth Schrier, Joanna Webb, Stephanie Byrne
CORUS

Barb Williams, David McCauley
Global Television Network

Ben-Marc Diendere
Québecor Media Inc.

Robert Parent
Radio Nord Communications Inc.

Madeline Ziniak
Rogers Television (Omni)

Bernard Guerin
TQS Inc.

Mark Prasuhn
Vision TV

Industry-related Organizations

Stephen Waddell
Alliance of Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA)

Claire Samson
APFTQ

Guy Mayson
Canadian Film and Television Producers Association

Lise Lachapelle
L'Association des réalisateurs et réalisatrices du Québec

Terry Scott
Radio and Television News Directors Association

Anne-Marie Desroches
Union des Artistes

Barb Farwell
Writers Guild of Canada

Employees/Performers

Leesa Levinson, ACTRA Toronto
David Onley, Citytv

Government

Lindsay Glassco, Amanda Scott
Social Development Canada, Office for Disability Issues

Appendix C: Summary Report of the Stakeholder Forum

CAB Stakeholder Forum on The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

July 15, 2005 – Marriott Eaton Centre, Toronto

Introduction

CONNECTUS Consulting Inc. (CONNECTUS) is pleased to present the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) with our Summary Report on the Stakeholder Forum held Friday, July 15, 2005 in Toronto.

The Stakeholder Forum is one of three core components comprising a qualitative research study on *The Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming*. The other components are (i) a review of international and national Best Practices in the realm of broadcasting and persons with disabilities and (ii) consultations through detailed interviews with over 40 disability NGOs, broadcasting companies and related organizations.

We proposed the Stakeholder Forum as a day-long exchange of ideas and perspectives among representatives from the disability community, broadcasters and other organizations, such as related industry groups. We view the Forum as a strong alternative to holding separate focus groups across the country, and as an event that would centre on ideas about tools and initiatives for broadcasters in an inclusive, facilitated environment of discussion.

Our Report is organized as follows:

- 1) Objectives of the Stakeholder Forum
- 2) Perspectives on Opportunities
- 3) Perspectives on Issues and Barriers
- 4) Perspectives on Tools and Initiatives
- 5) Other Ideas Raised
- 6) Impact on the Research Study

Individual representatives from twenty organizations and companies took part in the table discussion, while an additional 16 people from the disability community, broadcasting companies and government attended as observers. A list of Forum participants and observers is attached to this Report.

Objectives of the Stakeholder Forum

With input from the CAB Steering Committee and Outreach Committee,⁸ the objectives of the Forum were identified as follows:

- Test preliminary research findings, as derived from Best Practices research and consultations to date;
- Solicit ideas for Broadcaster Toolkit; and
- Increase dialogue between various stakeholder groups.

With additional input from the CAB Committees, the Desired Outcomes of the Forum were identified as:

- Prioritization of issues, barriers, opportunities;
- Recommendations for addressing/resolving issues, opportunities, barriers; and
- Suggestions for measures of success.

Sarah Crawford, Chair of the CAB Steering Committee, chaired the Forum. Preliminary research findings were presented by Richard Cavanagh, Project Lead and Nancy Steele, Project Associate for CONNECTUS. Lil Krstic, Senior Consultant to the project and a Partner with CONNECTUS, facilitated the Forum.

Perspectives on Opportunities

During the presentation on preliminary research findings, opportunities that potentially arise from greater inclusiveness of persons with disabilities within broadcasting were identified and discussed. These included:

- Increasing audiences: attracting a market of persons with disabilities and their friends and families
- Competitive edge achieved by tapping into creative potential of all diversity groups
- Accommodations that benefit all employees (e.g. automatic doors)
- Changing attitudes: the broadcasting industry is viewed as embodying attitudinal barriers, but is seen as a potential agent of change that can shape social attitudes.

⁸ The CAB Steering Committee is a Sub-committee of the Joint Societal Issues Committee, and is directing the Study on behalf of the CAB membership. The CAB Outreach Committee is an external group comprised of persons with disabilities, many of whom have direct experience in broadcasting and production. The Outreach Committee was formed prior to the Forum and will be reviewing subsequent Research Reports and providing feedback and advice to the CAB Steering Committee.

Further discussion on opportunities did not take place during the course of the Forum.

Perspectives on Issues and Barriers

Following presentations on preliminary research findings, Forum participants discussed and then prioritized key issues and barriers respecting presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming.

Four tiers of priority issues and barriers emerged from this exercise, and are arranged below by the order in which they were emphasized or focused upon by participants.

Top Tier

➤ Appropriation of Voice

Appropriation of voice refers to (i) the performance of characters with disabilities by non-disabled performers and (ii) the creation of roles for characters with disabilities by non-disabled writers.

Participants pointed to the particular importance of role creation by non-disabled writers, where disability culture and the reality of living with a disability are viewed as inaccurately portrayed.

Second Tier

- Sensitivity issues in news programming, including use of inappropriate language and lack of understanding about disability issues
- Near-complete absence of persons with disabilities on-screen (total for all programming genres)
- Lack of support from education sector for on-screen professions
- Myths carry into portrayals, i.e. widely held misinformation about persons with disabilities are reproduced through characterizations and/or storylines
- Lack of employees with disabilities in newsrooms
- Few on-screen role models (in dramatic programming) influences a lack of interest in performing at an early age

Participants were inclined to view a lack of on-screen presence and subsequent lack of role models as important issues. Related barriers were identified in a similar fashion, including a lack of initiative on the part of the education system, and the generalized attitudes and myths about persons with disabilities that find their way into on-screen characterization.

Third Tier

- Stereotyping (in general)
- Lack of outreach/communication between the disability community and the broadcasting industry
- Accommodation issues (e.g. employers overestimating the costs involved in accommodation)
- Inaccessibility of the broadcasting industry (e.g. a perception on the part of young people with disabilities that the industry is large, complex and difficult to gain entry into)

Fourth Tier

- Lack of knowledge about available jobs
- The view that employees would be a burden, not an asset
- Multiple barriers (e.g. disability combined with accent)
- Beauty/Image (i.e. the perception that the physical appearance of persons with disabilities, and/or their use of assistive devices, reduce opportunities for on-screen presence)
- Reluctance (among employees to disclose disabilities, among employers to sanction or fire)

Several issues were identified from consultations and presented to Forum participants, but did not receive any further discussion:

- Resistance from the production sector or program creators to use of persons with disabilities in programming and a lack of research on part of production sector (see also a reference to this in our Comment below)
- Lack of coverage of disability issues in news programming
- Characteristics of broadcasting industry as a barrier to employment (see also the section of this Report on Other Ideas Raised below)
- Older buildings owned/used by broadcasters presenting physical barriers
- The myth that physical or emotional disability equates with an intellectual deficiency

Comment

The evidence compiled at the Stakeholder Forum points to a very deep concern on the part of participants about portrayal issues, including appropriation of voice and stereotyping in dramatic programming, and sensitivity of language and depiction in news programming. This unequivocally supports the findings from the consultations process.

With respect to other portrayal issues, the single departure from evidence gathered through consultations concerns the role of beauty and image. While many respondents perceived a disadvantage to on-screen presence owing to physical appearance and/or use of assistive devices, this factor received far less emphasis among Forum participants and was actually viewed as irrelevant by several disability NGOs around the table.

A range of factors emerged with respect to participation in the industry, in a very similar fashion to the consultations. A number of issues and barriers were identified, including lack of role models, lack of support from the education sector, and accommodation-related concerns.

We also note a basic contradiction that emerged in the Forum discussions, with respect to the role of the production sector in the presence, portrayal and participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming. While “appropriation of voice” – especially in the creation of roles by writers – emerged as a critical issue, “resistance from the production sector” was not viewed as a fundamental issue or barrier.

Clearly, the creation of inaccurate roles/characters can be attributed at least in part to production sector activities or practices. The fact that participants did not make this link may be due to a lack of understanding about production sector operations in general.

Perspectives on Tools and Initiatives

The second part of the Forum focused on discussion and prioritization of potential tools and initiatives that broadcasters might consider in advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the industry. The session was open to any and all suggestions derived through brainstorming, with an understanding that subsequently the CAB Steering Committee would consult with the CAB Outreach Committee to determine the most viable initiatives for broadcasters.

Participants were divided into four breakout groups (three English-language and one French-language) to brainstorm and then report back. Based on emphasis and focus of discussion, four tiers of preferred tools/initiatives were identified from this exercise. Overall, perspectives on potential tools/initiatives were more widely spread across a number of proposals.

Top Tier

- Develop guidelines and industry standards
- Potential roles for the CAB: creation of a central hub or clearinghouse to identify resources/experts/create a Canadian equivalent to the Media Access Office⁹
- Scriptwriters to work with persons with disabilities for correct portrayal
- Ensure persons with disabilities are involved in the decision-making process through employment

Guidelines and industry standards were raised in most breakout groups as initiatives that could be developed through a cooperative effort by all stakeholders.

Second Tier

- Get the advertising industry more involved in this research/process for greater inclusion in advertising
- Find a way to better inform employers about the abilities of persons with disabilities

Third Tier

- Measures targeting performers with disabilities, including training opportunities, casting calls and other initiatives to increase the talent pool
- Use internships/mentorships
- Measures to sensitize program creators/industry/public

Fourth Tier

- Create series of on-air vignettes to be used for public education purposes
- Broadcasters to refrain from working with educational institutions that have not maximized accommodation
- CAB to create an “accommodation fund”, i.e. a centralized pool of resources from which broadcasters could draw for accommodation measures
- Create accessible inventory of jobs
- Place a list of consumer-driven disability NGOs (i.e. those run by and for persons with disabilities, as opposed to service organizations) on the CAB website

⁹ The Media Access Office is part of the California Governor's Committee on Employment for Persons with Disabilities (Inc.) and is funded by the state's Employment Development Department and by a not-for-profit "Friends of the Committee" corporation that engages in traditional types of fundraising activities.

In addition to the above noted tools/initiatives, participants identified a number of potential strategies:

- Advance anti-ableism education (this would be equivalent to anti-racism education, i.e. “ableism” is discriminatory behaviour toward persons with disabilities)
- Increase number of persons with disabilities on screen, use as a catalyst for broader change
- Strategy to address attitudinal change and measure progress
- Adapt international Best Practices (don’t reinvent the wheel)

Comment

The discussion of tools and initiatives at the Forum identified some differences with consultations to date. For example, the development of standards or guidelines has not been raised with any frequency during the course of consultations, but received the highest weighting at the Forum.

Conversely, while education-related initiatives have received significant attention in the consultations, Forum participants did not view roles for the education sector as priority initiatives.

In addition, while appropriation of voice was ranked as the number one issue, increasing the number of persons with disabilities on-screen was rated highly as a strategy or tool. This may be due to the assumption that a commitment to increasing presence is a necessary starting point.

There is general agreement throughout the course of the research – almost as a fundamental starting point – that the broadcasting industry can play a significant role in changing public attitudes about persons with disabilities.

Other Ideas Raised/Observations Noted

The following provides a summary of ideas/perspectives that were raised in the course of the Forum, either in discussion around the table, reporting from breakout groups, or in offline conversations during the day:

- Barriers for persons with disabilities are systemic, and discrimination is widespread. For example, editorial decisions in news gathering are guided by commercial principles. It may not be the journalist that is insensitive so much as it is the entire system that is insensitive.

- The world of disabilities is extremely complex, and developing tools or initiatives in partnership with the disability community must be done carefully. One-stop shopping initiatives such as Strategic Employment Solutions may not be the best approach to developing and implementing “Best Practices”. A number of participants indicated that it is extremely difficult for any single organization to manage initiatives or programs across all disabilities. However, there was strong support for a Best Practices development strategy that would use a network of organizations.
- Radio broadcasting should at some point be included in research on presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities in the broadcasting industry.
- Research on commercial advertising should also be carried out, and measures taken to advance presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities.
- A delegation of disability NGOs should make the industry more aware of their issues, in part through separate discussions with broadcasting industry CEOs and senior executives.
- Broadcasters need to make use of consumer-driven disability NGOs (i.e. those organizations run by and for persons with disabilities) in the development and delivery of tools, programs or initiatives.
- Although “characteristics of the broadcasting industry” – e.g. multi-location, high pressure, fast paced – was not weighted as an issue/barrier by participants, it was referenced in several offline discussions as potentially problematic for persons with disabilities and their ability to cope with certain industry jobs. This also supports a finding from the consultations.
- Background performers with disabilities should be included with greater frequency in programming production.
- There are disagreements within and between organizations, and between individual participants with respect to appropriation of voice, in terms of whether characters with disabilities should be portrayed solely by performers with disabilities. The range of individual perspectives included:
 - Able-bodied performers should *never* portray characters with disabilities as they are fundamentally unable to accurately convey life with a disability;

- “Doctors do not play television doctors, police officers do not play television police officers”; therefore, characters with disabilities can be portrayed by any skilled actor;
- However, a man does not play a woman in a role, *unless* that’s what the role calls for.
- Finally, acting is a profession, and the best professionals should be assigned roles, whether those people have disabilities or not, for any role. At the same time, performers with disabilities should have the opportunity to play any role.
- There is further disagreement within and between organizations and between individual participants on the correct terminology to apply in referencing persons with disabilities. One perspective argues that reference to a disability should be a secondary reference (e.g. “a Canadian who is Deaf”) while another perspective argues that referencing a disability should be front and centre in terminology (e.g. “a Deaf Canadian”).
- Broadcasters are one part of a larger, connected industry; full engagement of all industry partners – especially the independent production sector – is needed to effect change.
- Several measures of progress/success are in place now, including annual reporting by broadcasters to the CRTC on their diversity plans and activities. The CAB Outreach Committee will be taking recommendations about measures of progress under advisement as they continue to work on this project.

Comment on Measures of Success

"Suggestions for measures of success" was identified as a desired outcome of the Forum. However, there was a stated desire on the part of participants to spend more time discussing tools and initiatives. Therefore, the discussion on measures of success was delegated to the CAB Steering Committee that will seek advice and feedback from the Outreach Committee.

Conclusion: Impact on the Study

The CAB Stakeholder Forum provided a wealth of information that will make a significant contribution to the Study as a whole. To a large extent, evidence from the Forum supports and validates evidence derived throughout the research process to date. In other instances, the Forum discussion will guide the drafting of the Research Report in terms of how we will emphasize certain findings or priority issues and barriers, and will expand the contents of a potential toolkit for broadcasters.

The Stakeholder Forum proved to be a valuable and important addition to the qualitative range of research undertaken for this Study. While certain groups such as production organizations, French-language disability NGOs and a small number of English-language NGOs declined or were unable to attend the Forum, those in attendance were unanimous in their praise of and satisfaction with the session.

Consequently, we believe the Stakeholder Forum surpassed its promise and purpose, and the CONNECTUS team would like to extend its thanks to Susan Wheeler of the CAB, members of the JSIC Steering Committee, members of the Outreach Committee and all those who took the time to participate in this important event.

Richard Cavanagh, Project Lead
Lil Krstic, Senior Consultant and Forum Facilitator

July 19, 2005

CAB Stakeholder Forum on the Presence, Portrayal and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming

List of Participants and Observers

Participants – Disability Non-government Organizations

Jihan Abbas – Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres
Richard Lavigne – Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec
Gary Malkowski – Canadian Hearing Society
Constance McNight – National Network for Mental Health
Teresa Penafiel – Association multiethnique pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées
John Rae – Council of Canadians with Disabilities
Rachael Ross – National Educational Association of Disabled Students
Jim Sanders – Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Rob Sleath – Advocates for Sight Impaired Consumers
Diane Sullivan – Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
Devon Wilkins – Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians
Paul Young – People First of Canada

Participants – Broadcaster and Related Industry Representatives

Sarah Crawford – CHUM Limited and Chair, CAB Steering Cttee
Jean-Pierre Laurendeau – Canal D
Leesa Levinson – ACTRA
Don Peuramaki – Fireweed Media Productions
Terry Scott – RTNDA
Fiona Sterling – Bell Globemedia Inc.
Bonita Siegel – Corus Entertainment Inc.
Renato Zane – OMNI Television Inc.

Observers – Disability Non-government Organizations

Shelley Rattai – People First of Canada
Chloe Serradori – Confédération des personnes handicapées du Québec

Observers – Outreach Committee

Gavin Lumsden – Rogers Television
Janus Raudkivi – Journalist
Enza Ronaldi – Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario
Patrick Tanguay – Canadian Space Agency

Observers – CAB Members

Kent Brown – APTN
Kim Carter – Alliance Atlantis
Melanie Farrell – OMNI
Mary Kramolc – CHUM Limited
Jon Medline – Global Television Network
Mark Prasuhn – VisionTV
Ruth Schreier – CORUS Entertainment Inc.

Observers – Other

Marie-Claude Mentor – CRTC
Martine Vallée – CRTC
Amanda Scott – Office for Disability Issues

Project Managers

Richard Cavanagh, CONNECTUS Consulting
Lil Krstic, CONNECTUS Consulting
Nancy Steele, CONNECTUS Consulting
Susan Wheeler, Canadian Association of Broadcasters

ASL Interpreters

Cindy Carey
Laura Henry
Leslie Roach

French Interpreters

Wendy Greene
André Moreau
Barbara Reynolds-Debruyne

Appendix D: Other Issues Raised

Respondents in one-on-one consultations and participants in the Stakeholder Forum identified a number of issues about the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities that were beyond the scope of this research.

Assistive Technologies Used by Persons with Disabilities for Television Viewing

The research team received a number of comments about barriers to the participation of persons with sensory disabilities as consumers of television programming. These comments included:

- A need for more programming with associated described video. This was identified by a number of Blind respondents as the number one issue for the Blind community.
- A need for more sensitivity with respect to Blind viewers of news and information programming. Many Blind respondents identified the need for more voice-overs for financial data, weather information and sports scores/tickers.
- A need for 100 percent closed captioning and Deaf respondents identified more accurate captioning as an important issue.
- Deaf respondents also cited the general lack of simultaneous sign-language interpretation during newscasts as a something that broadcasters might consider addressing.
- A number of participants identified the need for broadcasters and television receiver manufacturers to work closely together in the development of assistive devices.

Advertising

While advertising content respecting the presence, portrayal and participation of persons with disabilities was beyond the scope of the study, a number of Study participants identified issues and concerns, including:

- Poorly conceived or disparaging portrayals.
- A lack of presence of Persons with Disabilities in Television Programming commercials.
- A need for more research on commercial advertising and persons with disabilities.
- A need to engage regulatory agencies overseeing Canadian commercial advertising with the concerns of the disability community.

Radio

While the focus of this Study was on television, a number of Study participants expressed their interest in seeing the development of research and/or initiatives by commercial radio pertaining to inclusion of persons with disabilities in that industry. Among the comments received:

- The type of work performed by commercial radio employees is ideal for persons with many types of disabilities, e.g. chase producers, voice-overs, writing, on-air talent and other types of jobs.
- Radio studios – especially older ones – tend to be cramped in physical design, and require a certain amount of redesign to accommodate wheelchairs.

The CRTC

- The CRTC, although recognized as a major supporter of diversity and a driving force in this research initiative, was criticized by a number of respondents for failing to include persons with disabilities in the original Public Notice on Cultural Diversity.
- The CRTC was also criticized for a perceived lack of consultation with the disability community, especially with French-language disability NGOs.

- The CRTC's website was the focus of comments by two blind participants as difficult to navigate and not blind-friendly, raising questions as to whether the Commission's website meets international standards for access.

Public Broadcasting

- While the CBC was applauded for programming initiatives such as *Moving On*, a number of participants criticized the CBC/SRC for a perceived lack of persons with disabilities on-screen. Most participants identified cultural diversity on CBC as far stronger than the inclusion of persons with disabilities on-screen, and most of these were vocal about the obligation of the CBC as the "national public broadcaster" to do a much better job.

The Research Team

Richard Cavanagh was Project Lead for the Study and authored the Final Report. He has extensive past experience in research and analysis in public/social policy, communications and media studies, and authored the 2004 Report of the Task Force for Cultural Diversity on Television.

Mr. Cavanagh holds an M.A. in Sociology from Queen's University, and a PhD in Social Sciences from Carleton University.

Lil Krstic was Senior Consultant for the Study. Ms. Krstic is a widely recognized leader in strategic planning and executive facilitation, and was our team's lead expert on disability issues. Ms. Krstic developed and facilitated the CAB Stakeholder Forum that formed a core part of the Study.

Ms. Krstic holds a B.Comm from the University of Alberta.

Nancy Steele was Associate Consultant for the Study. With extensive experience in disability issues and qualitative research, Ms. Steele conducted a number of consultations and led our event planning for the CAB Stakeholder Forum.

Ms. Steele holds a B.A. from Carleton University and a B.Ed. from McGill University.

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