

Meeting information

Title	Consumer Consultation Panel (CCP) for Canadian Administrator of VRS (CAV)
Date	May 6, 2025, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm Eastern Time
Type	Consultative meeting
Location	Zoom
Subject	Reviewing CAV's New Regulatory Policy (TRP CRTC 2025-54)
Present	<p>Chris Kenopic, Facilitator</p> <p>CAV Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suzanne Laforest, CEO and Executive Director • Paula Bath, Director of Regulatory Compliance and Strategy • Chad Taylor, Chief Digital Officer • Wissam Constantin, Manager of Customer Service and Outreach (Zoom Moderator) <p>CCP Members or Representatives (Present)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natasha 'Courage' Bacchus, (Ontario Deaf Sports Association) • Richard Belzile (Canadian Association of the Deaf) • Anthony Cashin, (Canada Deaf Grassroots Movement) • Benoît Landry (Association des personnes vivant avec une surdité de Laval) • Terri Nolt, (Deaf-Blind Planning Committee) • Pengchao Shao, (Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf) • Jeffrey Beatty, (Deaf Wireless Canada Consultative Committee) • Todd Tobin, (Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf) <p>Absent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connie Russell, (Silent Voice Canada Inc.) • Christopher Ramharry (Toronto International Deaf Film and Arts Festival)
Interpreters	English-ASL, ASL-LSQ
Additional notes	Meeting Languages: ASL, LSQ, English

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Introduction

The Consumer Consultation Panel (CCP) meeting was held with nominated members from CAV registered stakeholder groups from the Deaf community to discuss Canada VRS. A nonpartisan facilitator, Chris Kenopic, was invited to facilitate the meeting. The facilitator started introductions and explained the meeting agenda and process. A summary of the meeting will be shared publicly with names removed. The CCP will be for a term of two years and meet twice per year.

Theme: Reviewing CAV's New Regulatory Policy (TRP CRTC 2025-54)

RFI for VRS Platform

CAV confirmed the RFI process for the VRS platform is closed, and the next steps would be an RFP.

Customer Service Team

The Customer Service Team has transitioned into a department of CAV. Paula Bath commented that the Outreach team was on site at the Toronto Mayfest.

Direct VRS Numbers

Dedicated VRS numbers are now six (not ten) digits and are accessible to all VRS users. Suzanne Laforest explained that this change prevents non-VRS Registered users from using the number to skip the calls in queue.

Contract Opportunities with CAV

New possibilities for contract positions at CAV have been posted on the Canadian VRS website.

Discussion – Reviewing CAV's New Regulatory Policy

Governance – Mandate Change

The language in the governance mandate was changed to align with the Accessible Canada Act and replaced "deaf and hard of hearing" with "all individuals who use ASL and LSQ as their primary language of communication due to disability".

Member asked if the amended CRTC definition includes Indigenous Signed Languages (ISL). CAV explained that there is not enough information during the CRTC proceedings to formally add ISL, but the CRTC that opening a new proceeding by the CRTC are being considered.

Strategic Plan/Roadmap

A strategic plan project will be started soon to help clarify the values and goals and to capture CAV's planned service evolution. CAV confirmed they would be reaching out to various stakeholders, service providers, and interpreting agencies for additional feedback and thoughts. The process is expected to be complete by December 2025, and a summary of the strategic plan will be published publicly.

New Board Members

The CRTC has requested that CAV add two new Board members to CAV's Board of Directors, one representative of DeafBlind stakeholders and another Indigenous stakeholder groups. CAV explained that the two new members will be onboard as non-voting members to start, due to the need to re-evaluate the Board structure in accordance with the bylaws, and then the positions would be converted to voting positions. The next CRTC review was expected to be held in five years.

Budget Increase

The budget limit had been increased to \$41 million, and the budget request would immediately be published with no proceeding process to avoid confusion and delays.

KPIs

The speed-of-answer target had been increased to 90% or every 120 seconds, with the current rate at 80%. The uptime rate target had been increased to 99.97%, with the current rate at 99.5%.

Call Data

All 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 call data was to be reported separately starting in 2025. KPI data would be published in the annual report for 2025. Abandoned calls would be reported separately in 2026.

Member asked if VRS can be used to communicate with emergency staff in person. . CAV explained that VRI has not accepted, but in emergency cases, the VRS Video Interpreter is able to remain on the call until relieved by emergency personal, the Deaf caller or when an in person arrives.

Member asked if the option to text 9-1-1 or 9-8-8 was available. CAV explained that 9-1-1 and 9-8-8 has texting available. CAV clarified that this service is available but outside of what VRS provides.

Member asked about methods to access VRS in public spaces when there are internet connection issues. CAV explained that discussions are in progress on this topic, and once CAV has completed its RFP process for the platform more options will be explored for this.

Communications

Outreach efforts are being made to businesses and institutions to raise awareness of VRS.

Call Notification System

The CRTC has requested that CAV provide a device to notify Deaf users of incoming VRS calls. The Blink Light, among other options, are currently being assessed to determine its compatibility with the VRS system. This, too, will be a project for after the completion of the RFP. CAV noted that all interested parties would have to contact CAV to obtain this alert system.

Group Questions & Discussion – Reviewing CAV's New Regulatory Policy

Question 1: How should CAV notify users of planned outages?

Member suggested an alert be sent out ahead of the planned outage so VRS users can schedule around it. Member requested that the messages be sent out more than once.

Question 2: How should CAV notify users of unplanned outages?

Member suggested a similar concept to the Amber Alert-type message in the VRS app with an appropriate, DeafBlind accessible colour.

Member suggested doing an emergency-alert type test for the outage message a few times a year for practice.

Member suggested an automatic text alert with a notification via email and Facebook would likely be most effective.

Member suggested a separate portal to view outages.

Member suggested an Amber Alert-type message on social media in both ASL and LSQ, with the collaboration of BIPOC-like entities.

Member asked if a notification system could be implemented within the CAV app itself.

Member asked if the alert could be on top of the app screen and appear red to indicate a technical issue.

Member commented to be careful with colours due to not being accessible to all DeafBlind.

Question 3: How can CAV improve VRS ticket management?

Member asked if a screenshot could be saved when reporting a ticket online.

Member asked if there were methods to appeal certain decisions with customer service or ways to escalate issues, with a follow-up message from customer service every few weeks to ensure the concern is addressed.

Member commented that email communication can be difficult for the DeafBlind due to a lack of access to intervening services and support. Member suggested that CAV to add a fillable form on the CAV website for customers to submit complaints.

Member suggested that the form be inclusive of ASL and LSQ, with an appropriate background added to various levels of the CAV website.

Member suggested including additional options for a customer issuing a complaint, via being able to produce a video, send a text, or email.

Member requested various options to be available for communicating via visual language.

Member requested additional communication to ensure all tickets are being followed up on.

Question 4: How do you want to send technical feature requests with CAV?

Member asked for an email update regarding the implementation of new features.

Member suggested messaging be inclusive of all individuals, not just DeafBlind, as the service can be helpful to those without a disability.

Member asked how to improve access to DeafBlind individuals who don't have access to multiple social media platforms, and suggested conducting a survey to the community. CAV suggested adding a tutorial to the CAV

app that emphasizes where the new feature is located and how it functions, as opposed to letting individuals find it themselves.

Member noted that the implementation should be concise and avoid including too much information.

Member noted that some DeafBlind are not fluent in English or French and would need sign or plain written language to show steps. CAV suggested implementing an image countdown feature on the app to highlight new features being added in the future.

Member commented that text may be preferred for the DeafBlind with regard to the image countdown feature.

Open Discussion

Member suggested that customer service representatives be requested to stay on the line and not disconnect with DeafBlind users to ensure everything has been captured correctly. He suggested sending a confirmation email or text immediately after the call, along with a transcript.

Member commented how Zoom has a feature to download a transcript from a meeting, and it would be a good idea to implement with VRS.

Member suggested that a transcription be captured for all general VRS calls instead of just customer service. He also asked if VRS can be used anywhere in the world for DeafBlind users who travel. CAV confirmed VRS users can call anywhere globally, as long as there is an internet connection. She commented that only ASL and LSQ are available with VRS, and there are others who have different language needs.

Member asked if there are additional features in VRS to help Deaf individuals communicate outside of video, such as voice to text. This feature would make it easier to capture addresses and phone numbers and support call accuracy and comprehension. CAV noted the potential of more features to come for Deaf individuals with the improvements in AI technology.

Closing

CAV thanked all panel members for their feedback, and all comments would be taken into consideration when seeking a new service provider. A survey would be sent out after the meeting for additional comments and feedback, and a summary of the meeting would be posted on the CAV website. CAV requested all members to send their invoices to Administrative Assistant.

CAV provided an overview of how to access the CAV summary and terms of reference on the CAV website in English and French.

CAV closed the meeting by saying that a participation survey will be sent to meeting attendees, and a summary of the meeting will be circulated (without names) to ensure comments were captured accurately.