

**CCP Summary - June 5, 2024**

<b>Title</b>	Consumer Consultation Panel (CCP) for Canadian Administrator of VRS (CAV)
<b>Date</b>	June 5, 2024 – 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm Eastern Time
<b>Type</b>	Consultative Meeting
<b>Location</b>	Zoom
<b>Subject</b>	Technical Quality Plan, Video Interpreting Quality & Communications
<b>Present</b>	<p>Chris Kenopic, Facilitator</p> <p>CAV Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suzanne Laforest, CEO and Executive Director</li> <li>● Renu Sangha, Director Operations for VIPs and CFO, Jodi Birley, Director of Communications</li> <li>● Paula Bath, Director of Regulatory Compliance and Strategy</li> <li>● Wissam Constantin (Zoom Moderator)</li> </ul> <p>CCP Members or Representatives (Present)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Christopher Ramharry (Toronto International Deaf Film and Arts Festival)</li> <li>● Catherine MacKinnon, (Toronto International Deaf Film and Arts Festival)</li> <li>● Imran Hakamali, (Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf)</li> <li>● Leah Riddell, (Ontario Cultural Society of the Deaf)</li> <li>● Benoit Landry, (Association de personnes vivant avec une surdité de Laval)</li> <li>● Myles Murphy (Newfoundland Association of the Deaf)</li> <li>● Nicole Marsh (Canadian Association of the Deaf)</li> </ul> <p>CCP Members or Representatives (Absent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dellalee Piper (OVAD – Okanagan Valley Association of the Deaf)</li> <li>● Marie-Hélène Couture (La Maison des Femmes Sourdes de Montréal)</li> <li>● Véronique Leduc, (Maison des hommes sourds)</li> </ul>
<b>Interpreters</b>	ASL-LSQ
<b>Additional Notes</b>	Meeting Languages: ASL, LSQ, English

**Disclaimer:**

**This document is provided for informational purposes only. It does not necessarily represent the viewpoints of CAV. It is intended to provide a clear and accurate high-level summary of the topics discussed and removes identifying details of participants. It is not a verbatim transcript or intended to provide quotes of participant comments. In the event of translation errors or any concerns with accuracy, please signal your concerns to: [publications@cav-acs.ca](mailto:publications@cav-acs.ca)**

**Theme: Update the CAV Technical Quality Plans**

*Outages*

Customer feedback highlights the need for improved communication and platform reliability. CAV is working to address this by creating a plan to define outages, distinguish between planned and unplanned outages, and provide notifications to customers about how CAV is managing the outages. This is expected to be completed by June 30th, 2024. After its completion, the new outage process will be implemented over a few months. Additionally, the CAV platform provider, IVèS, is developing Platform (2.0), which is expected to be completed in 2025. This new version is hoped to reduce the frequency of outages.

*Dropped VRS Calls*

Customers are frustrated with frustration dropped VRS calls, which occur after waiting a long time and forcing customers to reconnect the call. The platform (2.0) project is expected to improve the dropped calls issue; CAV will closely monitor this for any issues.

*VI Transfers*

Customers are frustrated with VIs transferring their VRS call only after a short duration of time – such as less than 5 minutes. CAV holds a policy requiring interpreters to stay on the call for up to 10 minutes before transferring. Quick VRS call transfers will be monitored closely by CAV. Currently, CAV is collaborating with four VIPs: Assign (ASL), Convo Canada (ASL), SIVET (LSQ), and ISEP (LSQ), and any instances of short time-frame call transfers will be discussed with them to ensure call quality is maintained. If there are any complaints regarding VRS call transfers, reaching out to the CAV Customer Service (9050) is highly encouraged.

*Web-Portal*

Developing a VRS web portal calling option will be included in the Request For Proposals (RFP). This means placing VRS calls on a web browser and not on an application. Before releasing the RFP, CAV plans to release an Request For Information (RFI) this fall to gather information about companies interested in providing their services for the platform.

*Four Technical Feature Requests*

*1) Non-10-digit dialing*

Customers are currently only able to dial 10-digit telephone numbers, limiting them to making calls in North America (Canada & United States). CAV is collecting information on the impact of opening access to non-10 digit calls on the system and determining the associated costs.

#### *2) 3-Way Calling*

The second feature customers have requested is the ability to see the hearing person on the VRS screen along with the VI. This feature has large system impacts and will be included in the RFP. It is too early to determine if this feature will be implemented.

#### *3) 1-Click VRS Calling*

This feature requested by customers would allow a customers to click on a telephone number listed on a web-browser and have it immediately directed through VRS app and to a VI to place the call. This feature is not a current priority. First priority is creating platform reliability and stability. Once these stability and reliability issues are resolved, implementing new features, including this feature will be considered.

#### *4) Call Notification Options*

Customers would like more notifications of incoming VRS calls such as a flashing light on devices/web other than their phone. This feature will be included in the RFP and ensure compatibility with the platform before proceeding with its implementation.

### **Discussion Theme 1: Video Interpreting (VI) Quality**

#### *CAV Updates*

- The previous policy allowing customers up to three calls with Video Interpreting (VI) per session has changed. Callers can make unlimited number of VRS calls per session.
- A new self-announce policy has been implemented. This allows customers to announce their identity whenever they initiate a VRS call, instead of solely relying on the interpreter to announce the VRS call.
- There is a call-back feature that has been implemented. This enables the Video Interpreter (VI) to call back the caller when disconnected, when possible.

#### *CAV's Questions to CCP Members*

##### *1) How can CAV improve VI quality? (i.e., Training)*

A member mentioned that Sorenson (US) has a dedicated team that provides training to interpreters, which could potentially be beneficial for CAV to improve Video Interpreting (VI) quality.

CAV replied that as the VRS system in Canada differs from that in the US. CAV is the centralized administrator and provides the central guidelines, then the four Video Interpreting Providers (VIPs) are responsible for implementation of the guidelines, and for call management. The CAV's role primarily involves providing training to the four VIPs when there are VRS – related policy changes, such as the addition of 9-8-8 services. The four VIPs are responsible for training their Video Interpreters (VIs) based directly to follow CAV's Guidelines.

Another member raised a concern about the importance of knowing how to report issues with Video Interpreting (VI) quality. It is crucial for customers to inform the CAV's Customer Services (9050).

CAV replied that it may be possible to share how to report quality issues and on CAV's ticketing process to help callers better understand how to provide feedback effectively and what to expect.

A member mentioned confusion about the use of VRS in emergencies. Some customers think they cannot use VRS services when police or ambulances are present with a Deaf person.

CAV clarified that if a caller is in an emergency and needs assistance they can call 9-1-1 with the VRS app. Once the emergency responders arrive the VRS Video Interpreter (VI) will continue to interpret until an on-site interpreter arrive or if the VI is no longer needed.

*2) How can CAV improve VRS Call management? (i.e., Call transfers)*

A member believed it would benefit customers to receive a notification that the Video Interpreter (VI) on the call is approaching their time limit, preferably as soon as the call initiates. This should help improve calling experience.

Another member said banks and government agencies are still rejecting VRS calls.

CAV replied that it actively collects data on rejected calls by banks, governments and other agencies and has initiated a Dedicated Number's project collaborating with banks and government agencies to ensure they understand the purpose of VRS services. For example, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has announced the availability of a dedicated telephone number for customers to call directly via VRS, to reduce the incidence of rejected calls. CAV will continue to collect and analyze call data in order to find ways to improve the calling experience for customers.

*3) How can CAV make VRS calls more accessible? (i.e., Deaf interpreters)*

A member emphasized the importance of having Deaf Interpreters (DIs) available for Deaf callers and suggested this would provide better accommodation.

CAV replied that currently, Deaf Interpreters could work on a VRS call, if the Video Interpreting Provider provides such staffing. The remote teaming feature allows for a second interpreter to join the call. However, the Deaf customers would only be able to see the Deaf Interpreter (not the second VI). CAV will look into this further.

A member also mentioned the potential for improved access for DeafBlind customers by providing central locations where they could go and receive assistance with making VRS calls. DeafBlind customers have a range of needs; some require more communication support than others. A member mentioned that further research and data collection are indeed to understand their needs better.

CAV replied that it is currently collaborating with two organizations, *Touch Seeds* (US) and *Eversa (CANADA)*, to collect information from current and potential DeafBlind customers in Canada to better understand their needs of VRS. Once this information has been collected, it will be shared with the Deaf community on the CAV website.

## Discussion Theme 2: Enhancing CAV Communication and PR

### CAV Updates

- The CAV communications team has expanded and has added two new members: a Communications Manager and a Video Producer.
- In late 2024, the ability to post comments on the CAV Facebook page will be open to everyone.
- An Instagram account for CAV will be opened.
- Canada VRS's Anniversary, which has previously hosted at the CAV headquarters in Ottawa, will be held in Surrey, B.C., on September 28, 2024.

### CAV's Questions to CCP Members

- 1) *How can CAV quickly inform customers about a service outage?*

CAV explained that the service outage that previously occurred every early morning is no longer in effect. However, if a planned outage is needed, for maintenance for example, CAV is looking into ways to diversify customer notifications by possibly a text message, a video message, or an email (with an opt-out option).

- 2) *How can CAV improve its communication accessibility?*

A member explained that the language used in social media updates could be simplified, and more YouTube videos could be included on the CAV website. Other ideas were to allow customers to save or review CAV videos in their YouTube history or building a video history inside the Canada VRS app. Also, other accessibility options could be providing written transcripts and closed captions.

Another member suggested to extend the CAV's reach to other social media platforms such as TikTok and X. The member suggested that to gather more insights and ideas from the public, a survey could be distributed to better understand their communication accessibility needs. This discussion will be brought to discuss with CAV staff.

- 3) *What is your preferred way of getting information from CAV about Canada VRS?*

A member suggested using a QR code that could be printed on display, and link to the CAV's website for more information. Another suggestion was to make these updates available in the Canada VRS app, rather than solely relying on the website, as many customers typically use the app for VRS calls. Even, to collect quick feedback from Deaf VRS callers, a single-question poll could be distributed.

*4) What communication barriers or issues do you have with VRS?*

A member stated that interpreters, when interacting with a remote teamer, look sometimes distracted while listening to customers. This should be addressed.

Additionally, providing an option to black out the screen while waiting on a call should be considered, because it gives customers privacy. Some issues with the app functionality were mentioned, making it difficult to see an interpreter on the screen due to its small size. It's suggested that the app could be further tested to improve its functionality and accessibility.

To make the CAV group on Facebook more accessible to the public it should be transformed into a Page, eliminating any limitations or missed notifications.

Currently, on Facebook the CAV has two separate pages dedicated to one of the two signed languages (ASL page or LSQ page) and on LinkedIn the page is bilingual. With the intention to foster a connection between the ASL and LSQ communities should we combine the two language pages and allow everyone to see each other's comments and open discussions. The members seemed to support the idea of merging the ASL and LSQ pages together. Given Facebook does not allow more than one video to be posted at the same time, first an ASL video would be posted, then an LSQ video. Another member suggested that instead of having separate videos in ASL and LSQ, both languages could be featured in the same videos, allowing customers to access information in both languages simultaneously.

### **Open Discussions**

So far, the CAV has been sharing an agenda with CCP Member in advance and this is great. It still can be challenging for that member to coordinate discussions with their organization's board and members because the CCP meeting schedules do not always align with their organization's schedules. Given the CCP meeting is being hosted two times per year, confirming the date of the meeting well in advance could help the CCP member prepare.

A member suggested that CAV could also consider posting specific discussion questions on their social media platforms, possibly every 6 months or one year, to increase outreach and discussion among deaf customers groups.

Another member suggested that the meeting could be arranged in a public location where members of the Deaf community could share their feedback directly. CAV replied that it is already planning to host a coffee gathering with the Deaf community and that format will be more interactive with the community. The date of this gathering has not yet been determined.

There was some confusion regarding VRS policies for using VRS over Zoom. CAV policy is for conference calls held on VRS to be limited to 90 minutes. Using Video Remote Interpreters (VRI) is highly encouraged for online meetings lasting longer than 90 minutes, as it facilitates better and more effective communication, allowing interpreters to be familiar with the meeting agenda.

The CAV noted that the Quality Assurance (QA) of VRS Video Interpreting program has been on hold due to COVID-19. The CAV team is working to reinstate the program and make necessary adjustments, with completion expected by 2025.

The next CCP meeting will be hosted in the fall 2024. A new CCP member nomination process will begin in early fall with 10 nominations accepted (3 LSQ signers and 7 ASL signers) from registered stakeholder organizations. The CCP's Terms of Reference will be reviewed this summer and updated and will emphasize the importance of the CCP being a group of representatives of customers that is inclusive and diverse. Once nominations and organizations have been selected, the date and themes of the next two CCP meetings will be determined.

### **Closing**

A few members felt the CCP meeting was productive with some great ideas and wished to thank everyone who participated in the meeting. Some topics might be difficult and challenging; however, they felt it was worth discussing because it will open possible opportunities to enhance VRS services for the Deaf community.

The CEO and Executive Director of CAV thanked everyone, including the ASL-LSQ interpreting team and Zoom moderator, for their time and highlighting the great discussions and ideas that were shared. And that a summary of this meeting will be created and published on the CAV website.