



Our file number: 690144

*Received
01/16/15*

JAN - 5 2015

Mr. Stephanus Greeff
Interim President and CEO
Canadian Hearing Society
271 Spadina Road
Toronto, Ontario M5R 2V3

RE: An effective emergency communication system: qualified sign language interpreters and captioning of emergency public announcements for Deaf and hard of hearing citizens and access to televised and internet emergency information

Dear Mr. Greeff:

Thank you for your letter of 4 December 2014, addressed to Jean-Pierre Blais, with respect to the accessibility of information for all Canadians during emergency situations, an issue the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) takes very seriously.

As you are aware, the CRTC has established an Accessibility Policy to ensure that all Canadians are able to access and benefit from the Canadian communications system, including the broadcast of events where public officials are speaking. The Policy requires that 100% of English and French-language programming, including live programming, must be made available with closed captioning.

In addition, with respect to emergency alerts broadcast on Canadian French-language and English-language television, the quality standards for both French-language and English-language closed captioning¹ require the mandatory provision of all relevant information of an emergency alert in both vocal and written formats and the captioning of the emergency alert. In addition, the broadcast of a sign-language message as soon as possible is identified as a best practice.

As you may also be aware, emergency alerts that are generated by authorized government agencies are issued by the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination system, which forms part of a national public alerting system in Canada. This system falls within the mandate of Public Safety Canada. The alerts will be broadcast in both oral and visual formats, and starting 1 April 2015, all major broadcasters will be

¹ Quality standards for French-language closed captioning (Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2011-741) and Quality standards for English-language closed captioning (Broadcasting Regulatory Policy 2012-362).

participating in this system. However, to reiterate, these alerts do not fall within the mandate of the CRTC.

If you have questions about the emergency alerts issued by the National Alert Aggregation and Dissemination system, I would invite you to contact Public Safety Canada.

Please contact me if you have any further questions with respect to those elements that fall within the CRTC's mandate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Motzney', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the left.

Barbara Motzney
Chief Consumer Officer and Executive Director
Consumer Affairs and Strategic Policy