
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada



Responding to the New Environment: A Call for Comments
Review of the Canadian Communications Legislative Framework

Appendix A

11 January 2019

CRTC Tweet #1 from @CRTCeng on 17 October 2018:



**DID YOU GET WHAT
YOU NEEDED?**

DID YOU GET WHAT
YOU **ACTUALLY** NEEDED?



#CRTCFORUM
ON TWITTER 
OCTOBER 22 TO OCTOBER 26

CRTC Tweet #2 from @CRTCeng on 17 October 2018:



**DID YOU
UNDERSTAND
THE OFFERS?**

DID YOU **EASILY**
UNDERSTAND
THE OFFERS?



#CRTCFORUM
ON TWITTER 
OCTOBER 22 TO OCTOBER 26

'I feel cheated': Telco customer set to speak on Day 1 of CRTC hearing into misleading sales practices

Federal government looking to expand 'code of conduct' to include internet and cable services

Erica Johnson · CBC News · Posted: Oct 21, 2018 8:00 PM ET | Last Updated: October 23, 2018 Accessed January 10 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/crtc-public-inquiry-telco-sales-practices-day-one-1.4868784>

Rogers customer Shawn Ahmed, seen here in a recent interview with Go Public, will be presenting on Day 1 of the CRTC hearing on telecom sales practices. (Evan Mitsui/CBC)

290 comments

Shawn Ahmed says he knew he wanted to participate, as soon as he learned the CRTC asked to hear, in person, from consumers frustrated by their telecom service provider.

The federal telecom regulator is holding a five-day public hearing this week in Gatineau, Que., part of an inquiry into misleading and aggressive telco sales practices, ordered in June by the federal government.

"For the average consumer, this affects every one of us," says Ahmed, a Rogers customer who outlined in his submission to the CRTC concerns that he was misled about price.

"It might be the most important inquiry the CRTC hears for years to come."

Over the course of the week, the CRTC is set to hear from 31 presenters. They range from telco customers such as Ahmed — scheduled to speak on Day 1 — to advocacy groups, researchers and the country's three largest telecom service providers (Bell, Rogers and Telus).

The hearing is part of a months-long inquiry that received almost 1,300 submissions and [was called by the federal minister](#) for telecommunications after months of Go Public stories on the issue.

[OpenMedia](#), a consumer advocacy group pushing for affordable internet, submitted another 1,100 complaints from Canadians.

"I feel cheated by them"

Ahmed, 37, says that as a gay Muslim and social media activist, he has received death threats and has had to resort to worshipping online to protect his safety. He says the internet is not a luxury like cable TV, it's crucial.

"For people on the margins, like the elderly, disabled or immigrants, we use it as a lifeline," says Ahmed.

So when the Toronto man saw a billboard and Facebook ad for high speed internet with Rogers for \$74.99 a month, he signed up last January.

"I trusted what I was told over the phone," he says, but then three months later his Rogers bill increased. "I feel cheated by them."

Telcos are allowed to raise internet, cable and home phone rates as long as they provide advance notice, but Ahmed says it's unethical.

After filing a complaint with Rogers' office of the president and the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services (CCTS), Rogers credited his bill.

Do your job. Protect Canadian consumers, not the telecommunications industry.- Shawn Ahmed, Rogers customer

At the hearing, Ahmed says he will urge the CRTC to require all telcos to offer fixed prices for internet services.

"Do your job," says Ahmed. "Protect Canadian consumers, not the telecommunications industry."

Shawn Ahmed says he was misled on price. He wants the CRTC to make telcos stick to a set price in a contract, after his Rogers bill increased in the third month of a 12-month contract. (Evan Mitsui/CBC)

77% want action from government

As part of the public inquiry into telecom sales practices, the [CRTC commissioned public opinion research](#), which included focus groups and an online survey, and the results were recently published.

Some of the key findings:

- 40 per cent reported experiencing sales practices they considered to be aggressive or misleading, most within the past year.
- 77 per cent want governments at all levels to act to protect consumers from these sales practices.
- 83 per cent support a mandatory code of conduct for the telecom industry.

Government supports 'code of conduct'

It's all fodder for the Liberal minister responsible for telecommunications, Navdeep Bains, who is calling for the creation of a mandatory code of conduct to protect telecom consumers.

Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Navdeep Bains says his government has heard from a high number of Canadians who feel misled by their telecom service providers. (Guillaume Lafreniere/CBC)

"We want to make sure there's a clear code of conduct to protect consumers when it comes to wireless, internet and cable when they deal with their service provider," Bains told Go Public.

The Wireless Code, created five years ago, makes it mandatory for cellphone prices to remain fixed during the duration of a contract, but price protections don't exist for internet and cable services.

"We want to move forward in a manner that re-establishes that people trust and feel confident about their dealings with telecommunication providers," said Bains.

'People are angry'

One of Canada's most vocal consumer advocacy groups, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, is also urging the creation of a code of conduct, which it called a sales practices code.

"The code would generally say, 'We don't want to have misleading sales, overly aggressive sales, or ones that are unsuitable for the customer,'" says PIAC executive director John Lawford.

"It might have sections, for example, banning door-to-door sales, which are problematic," says Lawford. "It might have sections forbidding companies from disciplining employees for not making sales targets. It might have prohibitions on offers of free hardware where there's an underlying contract, and so on."

Lawford says a sales practices code would go a long way toward restoring people's trust in the telco industry.

"Right now, they basically believe that these guys are the used car salesmen of the 21st century," he says. "People are angry and they feel they've been misled."

Consumer advocate John Lawford says a sales practices code of conduct would restore people's trust in the telecom industry. (Jonathan Dupaul/CBC)

Telcos deny widespread problems

Later this week, a dozen telecom service providers will participate in the CRTC's public hearing.

In their written submissions to the commission, the largest three telco companies — Bell, Rogers and Telus — downplay the prevalence of aggressive or misleading sales tactics, and argue that many avenues for consumer protection already exist — such as the CRTC, the Competition Bureau, the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services (CCTS) and various provincial agencies.

'Mismatch' between expectations and outcomes

The first intervener to present on Monday will be the CCTS, an industry-funded independent agency that mediates thousands of complaints a year between consumers and their telecom service providers.

In its submission to the regulator, the CCTS writes that it can't say whether those complaints are the result of deliberate "misleading" by telecom companies.

"It is not the CCTS's role to investigate intent, nor would our current process allow it," the submission states.

It writes that a "mismatch between expectations and outcomes" often results in complaints about billing charges, service, delivery or usage, and that changes to any of these "take the customer by surprise."

The CRTC has to complete its inquiry and report its findings to government by the end of February 2019.

— *With files from Enza Uda*

Clarifications

- An earlier version of this story stated that prices can be increased during internet contracts, when in fact, fixed-term contracts for internet services alone do not exist. It also said that Rogers' ads offered a "guaranteed price" when in fact they offered a "guaranteed savings."

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