

Office of the Auditor General – Audit of Connectivity in Rural and Remote Areas

CRTC Detailed Action Plan

Report Ref. No.	OAG Recommendation	CRTC Response	Final Expected Result	Expected Completion	Key Milestones
25.	<p>Innovation Science and Economic Development (ISED) and the Canadian Radio-television and telecommunications Commission (CRTC) should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish consistent methods for telecommunications service providers to report the coverage of mobile cellular connectivity Verify the mobile cellular connectivity data provided by telecommunications service providers 	<p>Agreed. The Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on a Renewed Approach to Telecommunications Policy directs the CRTC to develop and implement a standardized and robust approach for reporting mobile wireless coverage. The CRTC will be assessing how best to address reporting consistency and data validation over the coming year.</p>	<p>Canadians will have clear and accurate information on mobile coverage.</p> <p>Telecommunications service providers will report data to the CRTC based on consistent, verifiable standards.</p> <p>The CRTC will collaborate with ISED to ensure work is complementary in achieving these outcomes.</p>	Winter 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CRTC will conduct an internal study on international standards related to mobile coverage. (Spring and Summer 2023) The CRTC will collaborate with ISED to collect the latest mobile wireless coverage data based on existing standards. (Spring and Summer 2023) The CRTC will commission an independent study to consider new coverage standards for Canada. (Fall 2023) The CRTC expects to launch a public consultation with stakeholders to establish new reporting standards. (Spring 2024) The CRTC will implement the new standards in its annual telecom survey. (Winter 2025)

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31.	The CRTC should routinely collect and verify data from telecommunications service providers on other aspects of connectivity quality in addition to speed.	Agreed. The CRTC notes that this recommendation reflects a similar intent as outlined in the Government’s Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on a Renewed Approach to Telecommunications Policy. The CRTC will be improving its measurement activities, including conducting hardware-based testing to measure the quality of connectivity (speed, packet loss, jitter, and latency) via an independent contractor in 2023, and expanding the data available to the CRTC on connectivity quality via direct data collection or independent measurement sources.	Canadians will have more detailed information about broadband services.	Fall 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRTC and ISED will finalize recruitment for the Measuring Broadband Canada (MBC) project phase 3, targeting fixed wireless broadband services. The next annual MBC phase may include oversampling in Indigenous communities. (Spring 2023) • The CRTC will launch a call for proposals on the acquisition of software-based testing datasets for mobile and fixed broadband services. (Summer 2023) • The CRTC expects to commence hardware-based testing as part of phase 3 of the MBC project and to acquire access to on-going software-based testing datasets. (Fall 2023) • The CRTC expects to launch a public proceeding to put in place consumer protections that increase the transparency of pricing information and service plan characteristics, which may involve, among other things, mandating a "broadband consumer label". (Winter 2024) • The CRTC will publish software- and hardware-based testing data. (Spring 2024) • The CRTC will make its decision on consumer protections that increase the transparency of pricing information and service plan characteristics. (Fall 2024)

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36.	<p>ISED and the CRTC should identify, collect and analyze data, including consideration of household income, to measure progress against the affordability objective of Canada’s connectivity strategy to support improved Internet and mobile cellular connectivity in rural and remote areas, including in Indigenous communities.</p>	<p>Agreed. The CRTC’s Broadband Fund supports projects that improve Internet and mobile services in rural and remote areas, at comparable rates to those services offered in urban centres. The Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on a Renewed Approach to Telecommunications Policy also emphasizes the importance of affordable access to high-quality telecommunications services in all regions of Canada, including rural areas. Starting in 2023, the CRTC will work to augment the data it collects and shares with ISED, for use by both parties in measuring success against the objectives of multiple initiatives, including the CRTC’s Broadband Fund, and the affordability objectives of Canada’s connectivity strategy.</p>	<p>Data on broadband and mobile prices and affordability will be available to Canadians and will be used to inform CRTC regulatory processes, including review of the Broadband Fund.</p> <p>The CRTC will collaborate with ISED to ensure work is complementary in achieving this outcome.</p>	Fall 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRTC will launch its first Public Opinion Research that will include questions on pricing and will be conducted biannually going forward. The CRTC will oversample from Indigenous communities to ensure higher quality data. (Spring 2023) • The CRTC will secure new Statistics Canada telecom expenditure data that will be published as part of its Communications Markets Reports and will inform regulatory proceedings as to trends and affordability. (Summer 2023) • The CRTC expects to launch a public proceeding to put in place consumer protections that increase the transparency of pricing information and service plan characteristics, which may involve, among other things, mandating a "broadband consumer label". (Winter 2024) • The CRTC will make its decision on consumer protections that increase the transparency of pricing information and service plan characteristics. (Fall 2024)

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53.	<p>The CRTC should expedite the application review and approval process for its Broadband Fund to speed up funding and implementation of connectivity projects. The CRTC should also notify applicants in a timely manner when the review of their project proposals has been put on hold, deemed ineligible, or not selected.</p>	<p>Agreed. The CRTC will be imminently undertaking a broader policy review that will seek comments from the public on a broad range of topics, including potential improvements to the application process, and applicant notification considerations. The policy review is expected to launch by March 2023 and will likely be completed with a revised regulatory policy issued in 2024.</p>	<p>Application and approval processes for the CRTC Broadband Fund will be improved and expedited.</p>	<p>Summer 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRTC’s Broadband Fund Policy Review was launched on March 23, 2023 (https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/consultation/broadband.htm). • Through this Policy Review, the CRTC will incorporate comments from the public with its own lessons learned over the last two calls for applications, in order to optimize and expedite the rollout of funding for broadband Internet and mobile services across the country. • The CRTC will accept interventions to the proceeding until July 21, 2023, and after any needed follow-ups and analysis of the record, the CRTC will issue a revised policy as soon as possible in 2024. • Given the urgent need for continued funding while the Broadband Fund Policy Review is underway, the CRTC launched a third call for applications on November 30, 2022, which closes on May 16, 2023. • The CRTC will issue its third call funding decisions while the broader Policy Review is underway.