



Telecom Decision CRTC 2026-8

PDF version

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Making broadband Internet and mobile service information available to Canadians – British Columbia Ministry of Citizens’ Services’ application to disclose certain Annual Facilities Survey data

Summary

Canadians need access to reliable, affordable, and high-quality Internet and mobile services for every part of their daily lives.

In Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496, the Commission established the universal service objective to help ensure that all Canadians have access to broadband Internet access services and voice services. The Commission and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) each have a role to play in helping reach the universal service objective.

As part of its regulatory role, the Commission collects data about telecommunications service providers’ networks, including information on where service is available. This information is shared with ISED, which uses it and other sources to publish and maintain its National Broadband Map (the Map), an interactive map that helps Canadians explore broadband Internet service availability across the country. Other information collected by the Commission is treated as confidential and not published on the Map.

In September 2024, the British Columbia Ministry of Citizens’ Services (the Ministry) requested that provinces and territories be given access to three types of confidential data collected by the Commission. First, it asked that more detailed information on where broadband Internet and mobile services are available in Canada be released publicly through the Map. Although ISED publishes and maintains the Map, this request was directed to the Commission because it collects the data and holds it in confidence. The Ministry explained that this information was needed to meet the Commission’s universal service objective, and that it would allow Canadians to better understand their service options at home and in their communities. The Ministry’s second and third requests involved providing data confidentially for use by the provinces and territories.

Based on the record of this proceeding, the Commission approves the Ministry’s first request. Approving this request means that the Commission will no longer hold this data

in confidence. Consequently, ISED will be able to increase the level of detail available to the public on the Map, which will help Canadians shop for the telecommunications services that fit their needs. Canadians will be better equipped to identify the service providers, technologies, and speeds available in their homes and in their communities. Providing more data will also improve the delivery of programs aimed at connecting everyone in Canada, including municipalities and public safety organizations.

With regard to the Ministry's other requests for additional information to be made available confidentially to provincial and territorial authorities, parties raised significant public safety concerns on the record. In the Commission's view, approving the Ministry's first request already serves the public interest as requested in its application. Accordingly, the Commission denies the second and third requests at this time.

To help improve accuracy and address gaps in mobile coverage, the Commission is also launching a public consultation today to seek views on a mobile reporting standard in Telecom Notice of Consultation 2026-9.

Background

1. The [Annual Facilities Survey](#) is an annual exercise conducted by the Commission to collect data from telecommunications service providers (TSPs) on their networks, including information on service coverage and available speeds and technologies.
2. Data collected through the Annual Facilities Survey supports the Commission's policies and decisions and feeds into the [National Broadband Map](#), an interactive map published and maintained by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) that helps Canadians explore broadband Internet service availability across the country and is the foundation of provincial, territorial, and federal connectivity programs. Currently, the map displays coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile services by provider, technology, and speed using 25-square-kilometre hexagons.
3. In Telecom Circular 2005-4, the Commission determined that, beginning with the 2005 data collection, TSPs would no longer be required to designate information as confidential when submitting data as part of the Annual Facilities Survey. Instead, the Commission adopted a practice where most data forms submitted would automatically be considered to have been filed in confidence.

Application

4. On 20 September 2024, the British Columbia Ministry of Citizens' Services (the Ministry) filed an application requesting the disclosure of certain Annual Facilities Survey data. In particular, the Ministry requested that:

- service coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile services be disclosed at the 250-metre road-segment level by provider, technology, and speed (first request);¹
 - complete broadband Internet and mobile service provider facilities datasets² be shared, via ISED, with the Ministry on a confidential basis for use in support of any existing or future contribution programs. This would include the right to make such data public at the same level of detail as that made available by the Commission and ISED (second request);³ and
 - the transport data⁴ the Commission provides to ISED be shared, via ISED, with the Ministry on a confidential basis for use in support of any existing or future contribution programs (third request).
5. The Commission received interventions supporting the Ministry's application from various provincial governments, municipalities, public safety organizations (including the Halton Regional Police Service and Peel Regional Police), and advocacy groups (including the Alberta Rural Connectivity Coalition, Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation, the Canadian Association of Wireless Internet Service Providers, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, and the Great Bear Initiative Society).
 6. The Commission also received interventions opposing the Ministry's application from Bell Canada; Bragg Communications Inc., carrying on business as Eastlink (Eastlink); the Canadian Communication Systems Alliance (CCSA); the Independent Telecommunications Providers Association (ITPA); Quebecor Media Inc. (Quebecor); Rogers Communications Canada Inc. (Rogers); Saskatchewan Telecommunications (SaskTel); TELUS Communications Inc. (TELUS); and Xplore Inc. (Xplore).

Requests for disclosure of information designated as confidential

7. Requests for disclosure of information designated as confidential are covered under section 39 of the *Telecommunications Act* (the Act). Specifically, subsections 39(1) and (5) of the Act apply in this case because the Ministry's requests relate to information submitted outside the course of a proceeding.
8. Under those provisions, the Commission may disclose or require the disclosure of information designated as confidential in two instances:

¹ The 250-metre road-segment level is also known as the [Pseudo-Household Demographic Distribution](#).

² The complete facilities datasets contain more granular service availability information.

³ The Ministry is seeking full access to the confidential Annual Facilities Survey datasets from ISED's mapping team (beyond the limited 250-metre road-segment level proposed for public release in its first request) and the right to publish those datasets at the same level of detail as that made available by the Commission and ISED.

⁴ The transport data contains the specific location of transport network endpoints where key telecommunications infrastructure, including copper facilities, is concentrated.

- the information does not fall within one of the categories of information that can be designated as confidential under subsection 39(1) of the Act; or
- the information was properly designated as confidential, but disclosure is relevant to the determination of a matter before the Commission and is in the public interest.

First request

Positions of parties

The Ministry

9. The Ministry submitted that access to more granular coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile services is needed to meet its 2027 connectivity targets, which are consistent with the Commission's universal service objective.⁵ It added that access to accurate and granular data would significantly strengthen connectivity planning, reduce duplication of efforts, and improve resiliency during emergencies, such as wildfires. The Ministry also emphasized that transparency is essential for Canadians to understand their service options at home and in their communities.
10. The Ministry stated that it does not currently have access to adequate information to identify gaps in coverage, particularly in rural and remote areas. It also noted that some jurisdictions, such as the province of Quebec, already allow consumers to check service availability at a specified address.
11. The Ministry indicated that the Commission's practice of automatically considering Annual Facilities Survey data as confidential should be reviewed. Specifically, it submitted that provider, speed, technology, and coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile services should not be treated as confidential because TSPs do not consistently treat this type of information as such. The Ministry added that consumers can access information about available services in their area through websites, customer service, sales, and marketing materials.
12. The Ministry noted that information on available Internet service plans and speeds is searchable by civic address and already available on many TSPs' websites. It added that TSPs without online tools are also able to share this information, either through customer service or other marketing channels, which shows that the data is not consistently treated as confidential by them. The Ministry submitted that if the data requested is found to be available publicly, the Commission should not continue to hold this information in confidence under subsection 39(1) of the Act. The Ministry indicated that treating service coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile

⁵ The universal service objective is as follows: (i) all Canadians should have access to Internet speeds of at least 50 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 10 Mbps upload (50/10 Mbps) with unlimited data options; and (ii) all Canadians should have access to the latest generally deployed mobile technology, not only in homes and businesses, but also along major transportation roads.

services as confidential is an outdated approach, particularly given broadband's critical role in society.

Interveners

13. Most interveners, including municipalities, provinces, and public safety organizations, expressed support for access to service coverage data at the 250-meter road-segment level by provider, technology, and speed. They highlighted that the benefits are far-reaching and include (i) supporting infrastructure investment, resulting in improved broadband Internet access across Canada, which helps achieve the universal service objective; (ii) strengthening public safety by allowing local authorities and first responders to plan and respond to emergencies more effectively; and (iii) enabling Canadians, especially those living in rural and underserved areas, to better understand their connectivity options.
14. The Halton Regional Police Service and Peel Regional Police supported the Ministry's first request. They mentioned that granular coverage information is essential for identifying coverage gaps and ensuring the safety of first responders. They added that having access to detailed information on service availability is vital for coordinating operations and identifying areas where connectivity is insufficient.
15. The City of Calgary also supported improving the granularity of data available through ISED's National Broadband Map. It explained that accurate service availability data is critical for identifying underserved areas and helping the public to understand what services are available to them.
16. Most TSPs mentioned that disclosing broadband Internet and mobile service availability data at the 250-metre road-segment level goes beyond what is necessary for public use. They argued that the level of detail currently available on the National Broadband Map provides sufficient information.
17. Bell Canada submitted that allowing consumers to verify whether they can receive service at a particular location does not make TSPs' service coverage information readily available publicly, which is why this information is treated confidentially. It added that it offered the ability to search by address on its website to support current and potential customers in determining what services are available to them. Bell Canada emphasized that it does not readily disclose its broadband Internet service coverage information, let alone at the 250-metre road-segment level.
18. Rogers submitted that, although TSPs do already make service availability information accessible to consumers by way of address look-up tools on their websites and through customer service, there is a critical difference between making it discretely available through those channels and making it widely available in a public database. It explained that its online address look-up tool only allows consumers to make a limited number of queries before redirecting them to Rogers' telephone support for further assistance.

19. Bell Canada, Rogers, SaskTel, and TELUS expressed concerns about how the Annual Facilities Survey data would be shared and stored. The companies cited the potential for data misuse, version control issues, and unauthorized access to sensitive information.
20. Bell Canada, Eastlink, Rogers, SaskTel, and Xplore submitted that the disclosure of sensitive network data violates section 39 of the Act, which addresses the protection of information designated as confidential, such as commercially and technically sensitive information. They added that releasing the requested data could reveal sensitive network information, making telecommunications infrastructure vulnerable to theft or damage.
21. Bell Canada, the CCSA, Eastlink, the ITPA, Quebecor, Rogers, and Xplore submitted that publicly disclosing detailed network data would harm TSPs' competitive positions by giving their competitors an unfair advantage. They added that releasing this data would allow competitors to develop targeted investment strategies, undermining TSPs' market positions.

Commission's analysis

22. The Commission notes that many TSPs already allow consumers to obtain detailed information on service technologies and speeds available at a particular address through their marketing channels (e.g., websites) and when providing customer service (e.g., on the telephone). Furthermore, although TSPs may limit the amount of coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile services that consumers can access through their online tools (e.g., by restricting the number of address queries consumers can perform), this information remains publicly available.
23. In addition, Quebecor mentioned that it has collaborated with the Government of Quebec to develop an interactive broadband map as part of the Operation High Speed program. The map provides service coverage information obtained from TSPs, demonstrating that this type of data is not consistently treated as confidential and that it is possible to provide more coverage information without disclosing sensitive network information.
24. The Commission therefore considers that coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile services at the 250-metre road-segment level by provider, technology, and speed is not consistently treated as confidential by TSPs.
25. Further, the Commission considers that, even if the information were deemed confidential, its disclosure would be in the public interest. For example, providing this information through the National Broadband Map would ensure that service availability data is presented in a consistent and reliable manner across the country. The data that the Ministry requested be disclosed (i.e., service coverage data at the 250-meter road-segment level by provider, technology, and speed) is essential for Canadians to understand what broadband Internet and mobile services are available in their homes and in their communities.

26. Regarding TSPs' concerns that publicly disclosing the requested data may harm their competitive positions, the Commission notes that approving the first request would allow for the same information to be made available to all TSPs, which could help small TSPs compete more effectively. Increased competition creates more choice, lower prices, and brings about greater levels of innovation, to the benefit of consumers.
27. Further, under Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-180, wholesale TSPs are required to compile a list of locations within their traditional wireline incumbent serving territories where fibre-based high-speed services are available and provide those lists to competitors upon request. Access to those lists can be made conditional to entering into a reasonable non-disclosure agreement. This illustrates that detailed service availability information is already being shared with competitors.
28. Regarding the argument that releasing the requested data could reveal sensitive network information, making telecommunications infrastructure vulnerable to theft or damage, the Commission notes that, while specific examples of network disruption were provided as part of this proceeding, the record did not demonstrate any causal link between the data being made publicly available (e.g., in the province of Quebec) and an increased risk to critical infrastructure or to the resiliency of telecommunications networks.
29. In light of the above, the Commission considers that the public interest in disclosing service coverage data at the 250-metre road-segment level by provider, technology, and speed outweighs any potential competitive harm and network security concerns raised by TSPs. The Commission also considers that service coverage data is relevant to the administration of the Act and its regulations because it supports the Commission's decisions and ongoing work.

Second and third requests

Positions of parties

The Ministry

30. The Ministry submitted that the confidential disclosure of complete broadband Internet and mobile service provider facilities datasets (second request) and transport data (third request) is necessary for provincial, territorial, and First Nation governments to further support connectivity planning, funding decisions, and efforts to reduce the digital divide.

Interveners

31. Multiple interveners supported the Ministry's requests and the sharing of additional information with provincial, territorial, and First Nation governments. They also suggested safeguards to protect confidentiality, such as non-disclosure agreements.

32. Build Nova Scotia, the Government of Prince Edward Island, and the Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure submitted that provinces and territories should be given confidential access to complete facilities datasets to meet connectivity goals and coordinate funding programs effectively. They added that limited data sharing hinders their ability to plan and improve connectivity services. They also emphasized that improved data access would strengthen provincial decision-making and support more efficient connectivity outcomes across Canada.
33. TSPs stated that sharing complete facilities datasets with the Ministry would involve disclosing information that has consistently been treated as confidential under section 39 of the Act.
34. Bell Canada, the CCSA, the ITPA, Quebecor, SaskTel, TELUS, and Xplore submitted that sharing detailed network data would increase the risk of vandalism, copper theft, and malicious attempts to disrupt networks. They added that facilities and transport data is sensitive because malicious actors could use it to identify vulnerable points in TSPs' networks.
35. Bell Canada and TELUS mentioned that disclosing granular facilities and transport data exposes critical telecommunications infrastructure to significant risks. TELUS reported multiple incidents of copper theft in 2024 that disrupted communities for extended periods of time.

Commission's analysis

36. The Commission notes that complete facilities datasets and transport data is confidential and that TSPs consistently treat it as such. Accordingly, this information falls within one of the categories of information that can be designated as confidential under subsection 39(1) of the Act.
37. TSPs provided evidence that detailed infrastructure data, such as geospatial data, can be exploited for malicious purposes. Incidents of copper theft and vandalism have disrupted Internet access service in the past, and in some cases, deprived communities of Internet access for extended periods. Considering these significant security risks, complete facilities datasets and transport data needs to be treated with a high degree of protection.
38. The Commission considers that, if granted, the second and third requests would involve disclosing highly sensitive data about critical telecommunications infrastructure, which poses significant security and resiliency risks. Unlike the first request, which entails disclosing service availability data, the second and third requests entail providing additional information related to network facilities that are vulnerable to theft and vandalism.
39. Accordingly, the Commission is of the view that the public interest in disclosing the information at issue in the Ministry's second and third requests does not outweigh the serious risks raised by TSPs. Moreover, the Commission considers that approving the

first request would already serve the public interest as requested in the Ministry's application.

40. In light of the above, the Commission considers that the record of this proceeding does not support the confidential disclosure of complete broadband Internet and mobile service provider facilities datasets and transport data at this time.

Conclusion

41. In light of all of the above, the Commission approves the Ministry's request for coverage data for broadband Internet and mobile services to be disclosed at the 250-metre road-segment level by provider, technology, and speed. The Commission will continue to work with ISED to make this information available to the public, notably through ISED's National Broadband Map.
42. The Commission denies the Ministry's requests that complete broadband Internet and mobile service provider facilities datasets and transport data be shared with the Ministry on a confidential basis.
43. To help improve accuracy and address gaps in mobile coverage, the Commission is also launching a public consultation today to seek views on a mobile reporting standard in Telecom Notice of Consultation 2026-9.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Call for comments – Mobile reporting standard*, Telecom Notice of Consultation 2026-9, 15 January 2026
- *Modern telecommunications services – The path forward for Canada's digital economy*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-496, 21 December 2016
- *Telecommunications industry data collection: updating of CRTC registration lists, telecommunications fees, Canadian revenue-based contribution regime, international licences and monitoring of the Canadian telecommunications industry*, Telecom Circular CRTC 2005-4, 9 February 2005