



FRPC calls on CRTC to review its 14-year old regulations for broadcast emergency alerts

(Ottawa, 30 May 2024) The Forum for Research and Policy in Communications (FRPC), a not-for-profit organization advocating on behalf of the public interest in broadcasting and telecommunications, has asked the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to review and update the broadcasting regulations that it established for emergency alerts in 2014. In the 10 years since the CRTC enacted these regulations – and despite the growth in the number and impact of weather-related events such as wildfires – the CRTC has not evaluated the impact or effectiveness of the regulations, or whether they meet Canadians’ needs and expectations.

The lack of any CRTC review of Canada’s broadcast emergency alerts system since 2014 means that the public may not know that, as the CRTC’s own 2024-25 *Departmental Plan* disclosed, some broadcasters are not distributing alerts at all. “Alerts distributed to cell phones alone may never reach those who cannot afford, cannot access or do not want cellphone service,” FRPC’s Executive Director, Monica Auer, pointed out. “A public review of the CRTC’s emergency alert broadcast regulations would enable the Commission to ensure that Canada’s national public alerting system serves all Canadians’ interests.” A public consultation on Canada’s broadcast alerting system would also enable Canadians to learn why some tests of the broadcast alerts system have not been entirely successful, why the online system that distributes alerts to broadcasters was offline for several weeks in September 2023, and what steps have been taken to correct such gaps. Reviewing the CRTC’s emergency alerts regulations should also let Canadians know whether the radio and TV stations licensed to serve their communities have the staff needed to provide updated local news and other information in the aftermath of emergencies.

FRPC formally asked the CRTC to undertake a review of emergency alerts in Canada’s broadcasting system at the end of March 2024. CRTC Part 1 broadcasting application 2024-0194-1 – *Changing times, changing needs* – asks the Commission to begin collecting information about broadcast emergency alert messages this year and to hold a public hearing in early 2025 to learn what people in Canada expect and want from its national alerting system. A public review would give Canadians an opportunity to ensure that Canada’s broadcasting system meets their needs by issuing timely alerts of imminent and serious threats to life as well as property at all times, in both official languages, using Canada’s broadcasting and telecommunications systems.

[Online copy of *Changing times, changing needs*](https://shorturl.at/91AaL): <https://shorturl.at/91AaL>

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