



18 October 2026

Vicky Eatrides
Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission
1 Promenade du Portage, Gatineau QC K1A 0N2

By e-mail

Dear Chairperson,

Thank you for your e-mail of 13 October 2026, in reply to FRPC's letter to you of ~~6 August~~ 5 October 2026.

I am taking the liberty of reproducing and then responding to the e-mail's five paragraphs.

Your e-mail began by noting areas of agreement:

"We all agree that public interest and consumer groups play an important role in reflecting the perspectives of Canadians. That is why the CRTC has mechanisms in place to encourage participation in our proceedings and regularly engages with organizations."

FRPC appreciates your comment regarding the role played by public- and consumer-interest organizations. Nearly all of these groups work to present the interests of people in Canada who are generally unrepresented or underrepresented in CRTC proceedings.

The Commission confirmed this view of public-interest participation 48 years ago when it laid the foundation for today's CRTC's telecom costs process in Telecom Decision CRTC 78-4: *CRTC Procedures and Practices in Telecommunications Regulation*. The CRTC then said that it wanted to "facilitate the involvement of the public in the regulatory process" and to "increase the capacity of interveners to participate at public hearings in an informed way".

The Commission was then aware that public- and consumer-interest organizations – for the most part not-for-profit organizations – cannot readily borrow money unless they can pledge assets and also cannot borrow money at all to participate in CRTC proceedings when repayment dates are uncertain and in any event are based only on a possibility that the CRTC may – or may not – approve cost-reimbursement. Since the early 1980s, however, the CRTC's telecom costs process has, at least until this past August, enabled public- and consumer-interest organizations to make evidence-based, legal arguments before the Commission on behalf of telecommunications



subscribers affected by wildfires and floods (2025-180), service outages (2025-227) and lack of access to Internet service, especially in the North (2025-10).

As for regular engagement with public- and consumer-interest organizations – again, something FRPC appreciates – this written exchange is taking place because FRPC’s 5 August 2026 letter and two subsequent e-mails to you – which asked to meet with you to discuss the months-long CRTC delays in deciding public-interest cost applications – were all answered by the CRTC’s legal department.

FRPC welcomed your introductory remarks at the CRTC’s first ‘consumer group’ meeting this past June, however, even though other commitments prevented you from remaining afterwards to engage with the five organizations attending that meeting at the CRTC’s invitation. FRPC’s last meeting with you was, as you may remember, in November 2025, following our publication in August 2025 of [*The CRTC’s performance, 1969-2025: Analysis and Recommendations*](#).

Your e-mail then addressed the concern raised by our 5 August 2026 letter regarding delays in CRTC cost-application decisions:

“As noted in your letter, timely decisions on costs applications are important. As you know, the CRTC is a quasi-judicial tribunal that must follow formal steps, including holding public proceedings to consult on applications. These costs, which are reimbursed by private companies, can represent large amounts (e.g., hundreds of thousands of dollars per proceeding), and are often contested by the payors.”

FRPC appreciates your acknowledging the importance of timely cost decisions and share the CRTC’s position that formal steps are important: this is why it has been somewhat surprising that the CRTC has not yet launched the review of the [*Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure*](#) which the Commission had said it would schedule in its November 2024 version of its ‘regulatory modernization plan’. As you know, those *Rules* (last revised in 2010) set out the CRTC’s requirements for applying for either interim or final costs in its proceedings, currently requiring cost applicants to establish that they offered the Commission useful information, participated responsibly and met the CRTC’s deadlines.

The e-mail paragraph above also mentions that cost applications “can represent large amounts (e.g. hundreds of thousands of dollars per proceeding). Without context one might not realize that the work undertaken by public- and consumer-interest organizations depends on the CRTC itself: it decides what consultations to hold, what evidence (if any) to make available as well as the clarity or complexity of the procedures involved.

As the Commission also knows, public-interest groups do not participate in every telecom consultation held by the Commission: of the 474 telecom proceedings it held in 2025, for example, only 15 (3.2%) involved public- and consumer-interest organizations.



Like FRPC, these groups participate when the CRTC's consultations affect Canadians' interests in matters such as the costs of basic telecom services (2015-134), the cost of data (2018-98) or the accessibility of mobile telecommunications services (2020-178, 2021-102). FRPC estimates that from 2000 to 2026 the CRTC held on average 22 consultations per year in which public- and consumer-interest organizations engaged: the total cost of public-interest participation over this period was just over \$400,000,¹ meaning that per-consultation costs of public-interest participation averaged \$17,800 per year.

As you may also know, of the 324 CRTC proceedings held since 2000 in which the CRTC considered public- and consumer-interest organizations' applications to be reimbursed for their costs, only 4% resulted in 'hundreds of thousands' of costs. To put this another way, in 206 years 13 CRTC processes resulted in public-interest reimbursement claims exceeding \$200,000. 164 – or half 50.6%) of the proceedings had total public-interest participation expenses of less than \$7,000.

Public-interest participation costs were unusually high in those 13 proceedings because they were complex and involved policies directly affecting many Canadians. Consequently, a wide range of consumer organizations participated to advocate on behalf of Canadians' social and economic needs for high-speed Internet access (2022-147), emergency alerts in remote or rural areas threatened by wildfires or other imminent threats (2025-180), affordable telecommunications to communicate with their Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing family, friends or colleagues (2021-102), or for telecommunications services that are more affordable (2015-134). The *average* reimbursement requested, incidentally, by groups in those 13 proceedings ranged from \$19,088 to \$117,195.

Since January 2023, incidentally, the CRTC has launched 1,408 telecom proceedings and of these, only two resulted in more than \$200,000 of public-participation costs: both were in 2025. One dealt with the accessibility of telecommunications: seven groups applied for reimbursement of an average of \$64,661 of their costs (totalling \$452,630). The other dealt with the CRTC's approach to ensuring financial support for public-interest participation in the 21st century²: 18 groups asked for reimbursement of an average \$19,088 of their costs (totalling \$343,583).

While not commonly known, the CRTC is required to be an independent arbiter, so to speak, in its proceedings: it has not been established with a specific legal duty to serve the public interest or to place public interests foremost in its decisions. The challenge since 1978 is simply that many of the CRTC's consultations deal with complex issues – a funding mechanism at least enabled public-interest groups to participate and, if necessary, to challenge better-funded telecommunications parties. In 2019, in fact, the CRTC noted that communications companies participating in its

¹ We estimate this figure as it is based on the costs for which applicants applied, rather than the costs the CRTC approved (either in whole, in part or not at all).

² As Parliament in April 2023 specifically changed Canada's broadcasting legislation to establish financial support for public-interest organizations in broadcasting. (Part 1 of the decision in this proceeding was published at the beginning of August 2026.)



proceedings “generally have substantial internal resources and can afford to retain external consultants and lawyers, and ... commission research to put forward their views and evidence in a proceeding.”³

So when thinking about the hundreds of thousands of dollars that 13 proceedings have cost since 2000, what public- and consumer-interest organizations – and, we understand, the CRTC – do not know is precisely how much Canada’s telecommunications service providers spend on internal and external regulatory resources. If they spend very little, that could obviously support the idea that requiring these companies to pay ‘hundreds of thousands’ in public-interest participation costs in the CRTC’s telecom proceedings is unreasonable and unduly burdensome.

The most recent data published by the CRTC show that in 2024 telecommunications service providers earned \$59.6 billion from their mobile, Internet and other telecommunications services. Suppose the companies overall used 1% of this— \$596,343,926 – for their CRTC regulatory spending for the following year. If so, the companies would have spent 850 times the total expenditures of 17 public- and consumer-interest organizations (\$701,445) to participate in 17 different telecom proceedings in 2025. FRPC appreciates the CRTC’s ongoing commitment to ensuring that public- and consumer-interest organizations participate efficiently in its proceedings.

Your e-mail next went on to say that the Commission is

“... continuing to take steps within our control to speed up the process. As you know, we have reintroduced interim costs awards to allow organizations to receive payments earlier and have significantly increased the scale of costs. The internal changes we have made to speed up decisions are also showing results. For example, decisions on applications that were filed this year were published in less than half the time it took in 2025. From the time the application comes in, to when the decision is published, we have decreased the average time to three months. You will have seen a number of costs decisions published recently, and this pace will continue with many more coming out in the next few weeks.”

Cost applications can indeed represent such amounts and without context might resemble an ever-expanding black hole, with significant percentage increases from one year to the next for reasons beyond any organization’s control.⁴

As the CRTC’s procedural *Rules* have for decades explicitly allowed public- and consumer-interest organizations to apply for interim costs to participate in its proceedings – and to the best of our knowledge the CRTC did not in that period publicly announce its decision to suspend that part of

³ CRTC’s written public submission to the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel (undated, but 2019), Cat. No.: [BC92-102/2019E-PDF](#), at paragraph 17.

⁴ The CRTC’s operational costs increased by 15.9% from 2023/24 to 2024/25. See CRTC, [Departmental Results Report 2023-24](#), Cat. No. BC9-27E-PDF, Table 8, “Actual three-year spending on core responsibilities and internal services (dollars)”, “Total”: \$92,581,538; CRTC, [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission 2025–26 Departmental Plan](#), Table 8 (“Three-year spending summary for core responsibility and internal services (dollars)”), “Total” (2024-2025 forecast spending): \$107,337,814.



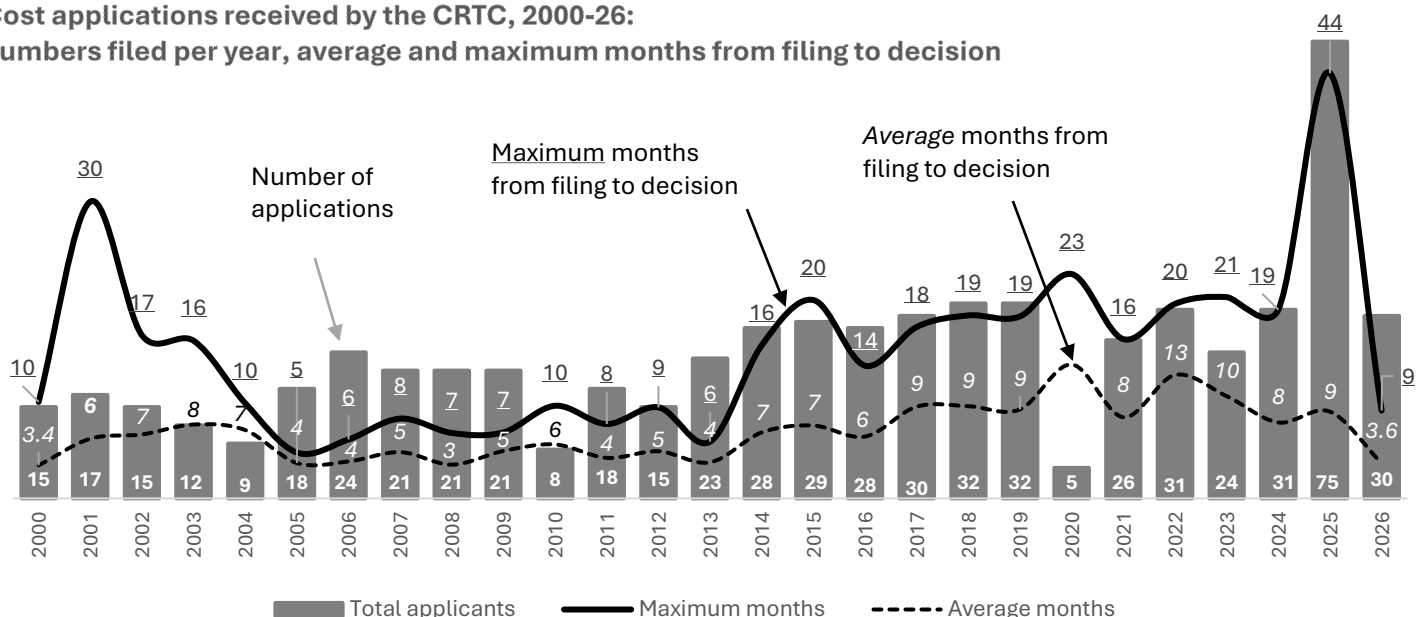
the *Rules* – FRPC appreciates the CRTC’s ‘reintroduction’ of an interim costs process (though, to be clear, the process as currently designed is not intended for costs incurred, say, halfway through a years-long proceeding, but at proceeding’s outset – advance costs, in other words).

The Forum also welcomed the CRTC’s decision to increase the rates that public- and consumer-interest organizations must use to pay for legal, consulting and other work. Your e-mail mentioned that these rates were raised “significantly”. While that is quite true, some context might be useful: the CRTC’s August 2026 decision raised the rates to adjust for the impact of 16 years of inflation since 2010 because it had not otherwise changed the rates since 2007. If the CRTC had reviewed the rates earlier – as FRPC requested several times before 2026 – the increase might well have been less ‘significant’.

As for timeliness, FRPC would welcome the CRTC’s efforts – ongoing, we understand, for several years now – to reduce the time it takes to decide public- and consumer-interest organizations’ cost applications which, under the CRTC’s procedural *Rules*, can only be submitted either at the beginning under the now-unsuspended interim-cost process or after the public-participation component of the proceedings ends (which may in some cases takes years).

Reducing the time from applications’ submission to CRTC decisions to an average of 3.6 months is very welcome even if, as it happens, the CRTC’s average at the beginning of the 21st century was slightly lower (3.4 months).

Cost applications received by the CRTC, 2000-26:
numbers filed per year, average and maximum months from filing to decision



Moreover, the 3.6 month average mentioned in your e-mail appears to be based on the applications the CRTC has decided: when the 12 applications filed in 2026 that have been at the Commission for more than one month are included, the average time between applications and



costs rises to 7.2 months. We estimate that another 20 applications have been submitted to, but remain undecided by, the Commission.

Of course, one minor problem with using ‘average’ months to understand the CRTC’s timeliness in deciding reimbursement applications is that in 7 of the last 10 years at least one applicant has waited somewhat longer for a decision – a year and a half (18 months) or longer as indicated in the chart above.

What these numbers also do not show is the reason for these significant delays. For example, the CRTC has ordered the reimbursement of ten applicants’ costs of their work in the proceeding for stabilizing financial support for public-interest participation – which ended last November: it has not decided the remaining eight cost applications, now on hold for more than ten months on average.

Not deciding cost applications that have been at the CRTC far longer than three months means that public- and consumer-interest organizations cannot pay those who did the work: this tends to discourage younger professionals and smaller companies from accepting work if they know or learn that they may not be paid for months or years. (As you know, parties whose reimbursement costs are approved do not receive interest or any other payment to compensate their waiting – say, for 18 months – for the Commission’s decisions.) Not deciding applications also leaves applicants in legal limbo: they cannot, for instance, ask the CRTC to review or vary a decision or apply to the Federal Court of Appeal to challenge a decision that has not been made.

Rather than encouraging public-interest participation, unexplained and prolonged decision-making delays discourages it. Some public- and consumer-interest organizations admit in private that they fear raising the matter of delays in cost-reimbursement decisions will lead to even longer delays for the obvious reason that no organization enjoys being criticized; others may simply withdraw from this sector because many – including, perhaps, the Commission’s staff and consultants⁵ – rely on prompt payment for their time.

Your decisions as the CRTC’s chief executive officer responsible for the “direction of the work and staff of the Commission”⁶ not to permit these applications to be decided by your fellow CRTC Commissioners leaves the Federal Court of Appeal and a ‘writ’ ordering the Commission to decide the undecided applications as public-interest groups’ only legal remedy: this seems both unreasonable and costly. Is this necessary – or could this matter be resolved by the Commission in a timely way?

Your e-mail then noted that

⁵ We understand from the government’s ‘contracts over \$10,000’ website that from 2023 to 2026 the CRTC expended \$469,499 on four surveys, amounts out of range for most public-interest participants (and under the first of the CRTC’s 2025-94 decisions [2026-201, paragraphs 17-18] now ineligible for any reimbursement in most CRTC proceedings).

⁶ [CRTC Act](#), s. 6(2).



“[i]n our meetings together over the past year, we have consistently encouraged ongoing dialogue. When you reached out in August, our Senior General Counsel and Vice-President for Legal Services, Anthony McIntyre, who is the senior executive responsible for costs awards, followed up right away to address the issues you raised. I understand that you have been in regular communication and that you are meeting tomorrow.”

As noted earlier, FRPC appreciated the opportunity to meet with you in November 2025 and to hear your welcoming remarks at the CRTC staff’s June 2026 meeting with public- and consumer-interest organizations. You graciously invited FRPC and several other organizations to contact your office whenever we had matters requiring discussion with you – although, as mentioned earlier, we did not receive a response from your office to any of our three August 2026 requests to meet with you, all of which were answered by the CRTC’s Senior General Counsel and Vice-President, Legal Services. While we met, as you indicated, with several of the Commission’s legal staff on 14 October, the questions raised by FRPC at this meeting were not answered. This is not because the CRTC’s legal staff lack knowledge or expertise but because, as a matter of practice and protocol, they can only describe and repeat the wording of the Commission’s decisions that, as it happens, FRPC had also already read.

Finally, your e-mail concluded by thanking FRPC for its “continued engagement on these important issues. We look forward to continuing the conversation.” We in turn thank you, Madame Chairperson, for any efforts on the part of the CRTC to encourage public-interest participation in the Commission’s proceedings by allowing your colleagues on the Commission to decide dozens undecided reimbursement applications before the end of this month.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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cc:

The Honourable Marc Miller, P.C., M.P., Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages
The Honourable Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P., Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions
Anthony McIntyre, Senior General Counsel and Vice-President, Legal Services
Scott Hutton, Secretary General and Executive Vice-President, Corporate Services and Operations