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Vicky Eatrides
Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada, K1A 0N2

VIA Mail & Email

April 14, 2023

Dear Vicky Eatrides:

We'd like to extend our congratulations to you on your appointment as Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

We are Members of Provincial Parliament who represent Toronto ridings and believe that transit riders and operators deserve to have telecom connectivity and access in all parts of the Toronto Transit system. The number of passengers who use Toronto's subway system daily is nearly a million, and as the city continues to grow, this number will only rise. Access to connectivity is a matter of public safety for riders, operators, and the public who need access to emergency services or simply want to stay in touch while they are in transit. This is not a new issue, however, with the rise in safety incidents on the TTC, the need for cell-service in the subway has become more urgent than ever.

Over a decade ago, BAI obtained the rights to build wireless telecom infrastructure throughout the TTC. Due to the unwillingness of major carriers Bell, Rogers, and Telus to reach an agreement with BAI, only a small fraction of consumers were able to access service in only a fraction of the transit system.

Together with our Ontario NDP colleagues we have been calling for a solution which would ensure that connectivity is available in our tunnels. There have been numerous serious public safety incidents, demonstrating that there is a strong public interest in ensuring that access is available immediately, not at some indeterminate time in the future.

As a result of media attention and public outcry on the issue, Rogers has announced what it sees as the solution to this longstanding problem: it will acquire the existing provider, BAI. Rogers has stated that their intention upon completing the transaction is to establish 'seamless wireless coverage with mobile voice and data services in all 75 stations and almost 80 kilometres of Toronto's subway system.'

Although it is essential to have connectivity throughout the transit system, the announcement of this acquisition nevertheless creates cause for concern. Rogers and the other national carriers' refusal to deal with BAI means that they must share the blame for the lack of connectivity that has persisted over the last decade.

We are concerned about overall competitiveness in the wireless market, and about the specific problems caused by a lack of competition, such as the lack of coverage in the TTC.

Regardless of who ends up operating the communication infrastructure in question, we hope that the CRTC will ensure that access to wireless service in the subway will be seamless for everyone with a cell phone

regardless of whether Rogers is their carrier and that there would be no additional cost on the already exorbitant costs incurred by Canadian wireless customers – who face some of the highest rates in the world.

It is our hope that the CRTC will ensure that any wholesale agreements that may be entered into by Rogers as a result of the recently announced acquisition are inclusive, fair, and expedient. We strongly urge the Commission to inspect any such agreements as soon as possible, and, if necessary, to exercise its powers to ensure that anyone using the subway, regardless of their choice of communication service provider (and even those who have a device but no active subscription) are able to avail themselves of essential telecommunication services while in transit.

Sincerely,



Tom Rakocevic
Member of Provincial Parliament
Humber River-Black Creek



Chris Glover
Member of Provincial Parliament
Spadina-Fort York