



August 9, 2023

To Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
C.D. Howe Building
235 Queen St
Ottawa ON
K1A 0H5

Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CTRC)

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada,
K1A 0N2

and Telecommunication Providers (Bell)

Subject: Improved Cell (Mobility) Service and Coverage

Through this correspondence the West Hants Regional Municipality and its Council would like to express the need for improved mobility service in the West Hants Regional Municipality. At the June 29th, 2023 Council meeting, the following recommendation was approved expressing Council's concern regarding this matter.

MOVED BY COUNCILLORS M. MCLEAN AND SMITH THAT COUNCIL DIRECT STAFF TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE PROPER ORGANIZATIONS ABOUT THE POOR CELL SERVICE IN WEST HANTS REQUESTING THAT PROVIDERS EXPLORE ALL OPTIONS THAT WOULD RESULT IN INCREASED CELLULAR SERVICE FOR WEST HANTS. MOTION CARRIED.

The Municipality recognizes the increased demands on mobility services and the existing infrastructure with today's wide range of users and applications. However, there are many areas within the municipality such as Brooklyn, Ellershouse, and Vaughan where calls are frequently dropped or cannot be made resulting in concern over public safety should an emergency arise.

Since the release of Canada's connectivity strategy by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada in 2019, we were told that "mobile cellular coverage has improved". However, a 2023 report (1 of 4) done by the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada tells a different tale. Take a one-hour drive northwest of Halifax, you will experience the "digital divide", that still exists between urban Nova Scotia and the rural areas of West Hants, and our neighbouring Glosscap First Nation reserve.

In 2019, correspondence was sent regarding the unreliability of cellular service in the West Hants area, particularly the unavailability of the 911 system. With little response received, the West Hants Regional Municipality is once again calling for action to address this safety concern. Residents and Emergency services rely on cellphones to alert people of dangers. We need Governments and regulators to address connectivity dead zones across our region.

Given the tragic events experienced in Nova Scotia the last few years; Portapique tragedy, Nova Scotia Wildfires and specifically, the massive flooding triggered by widespread rainstorms in West Hants, the urgency to have communications available to all of our residents is CRITICAL.

During the July 21, 2023 torrential downpour and persistent thunder and lightning event, many were left with no access to telecommunications. Residents and emergency crews within West Hants were unable to have access to acceptable cellular service without calls being completed or dropped due to poor service levels. There is no question telecommunications need to improve.

Canada's connectivity strategy stated, "being connected is no longer a luxury but a basic essential service. Can you imagine being stranded in a flash flood and not being able to call for help? Can you imagine trying to coordinate a search for missing persons and having little to no cell coverage.

West Hants Regional Municipality is requesting the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) step in to address greater regulations within the industry for performance standards.

The Municipality would like to assist in any way it can with improving mobility services. We will start by inviting you to participate in an information exchange regarding the current service coverage you offer, what challenges you are facing, and how improvements can be made to the overall service. For example, we have had past engagements with specific carriers to assist with site locations for cell tower installations. We would be open to discussing such matters and others.

I thank you for your time in reviewing this letter and assume you have mutual interest in improving services. At your convenience, please reach out to me so that we might establish a dialogue.

Yours truly



Mark Phillips
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment: 2019-10-21 Letter to CRTC Re Reliable Cell and Land-line service

mp/ds

cc:

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Francois-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry of Canada

The Honourable Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia

The Honourable Kim Masland, Nova Scotia Minister of Public Works

Kody Blois, M.P. Kings-Hants

MLA, Melissa Sheehy-Richard

WHRM Council

NSFM

West Hants Regional Municipality

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WEST HANTS
NOVA SCOTIA

October 21, 2019

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2

Re: Reliable Telecommunication Service

Members of the CRTC,

The Municipality of the District of West Hants, a largely rural municipality, has many areas that lack in the infrastructure required for reliable cell phone coverage therefore have many of our residents reliant on landlines.

During the recent storm, Hurricane Dorian, most of our residents lost power and had to rely on their cellular and home phones to receive safety and power updates and to be able to check on the welfare of friends and family. Unfortunately, due to the lack of infrastructure and power back up provisions in place by telecommunication providers, the cell phone service was spotty, and many home phone services were completely unusable.

The Council of West Hants requests that the CRTC stress to telecommunication providers the importance of having reliable phone service during weather related events for the safety of all residents in Canada. We also ask that you encourage telecommunication providers to strengthen their infrastructure to withstand similar weather events.

Sincerely,

Abraham Zebian
Warden