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Consumer Internet and Wireless Demands Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

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Given various governments' requirements for Canadians to self-isolate during the COVID-19 pandemic, and given the declaration of provincial and territorial states of emergency in all ten provinces and three territories, and given federal requests to social distance, resulting in loss of wages, income supports, and etc., and given the inevitable delays in the extension of income support to Canadians and its likely inadequacy to replace all demonstrable financial need;

Then on behalf of all Canadian telecommunications consumers, and in particular those customers who are living on low-income, fixed income and income assistance, including seniors, we, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), ACORN Canada (ACORN) and the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) hereby demand of:

- the **Canadian federal government**, which has constitutional jurisdiction over the telecommunications sector;
- the **Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)**, which regulates the telecommunications sector in accordance with the federal *Telecommunications Act* and other related laws;
- the **telecommunications industry** and their several **Internet service providers (ISPs)**, **wireless services providers (WSPs)** under CRTC regulation;

That they require, encourage, cooperate and react to ensure the following consumer demands in relation to essential telecommunications services are met, which are based on demonstrable need due to the health, physical distancing and isolation, economic, social and political changes required by governments and corporations, through no fault of consumers, commencing 1 April 2020 and for the next 6 months thereafter, or upon the revocation of provincial or federal states of emergency, whichever is longer (“pandemic and recovery period”*), related to COVID-19 pandemic:

Retail Internet Access Services



In relation to “retail internet access services”, we demand:

For all customers:

1. Unlimited data (no “data cap”) at no extra cost;
2. Prohibition of any “overage charge” for data use;
3. Prohibition of price increases;
4. Prohibition of disconnection for non-payment, arrears or any other reasons without the explicit, individual, prior consent of the CRTC;

For all “low-income Canadians” and “fixed-income seniors”:

5. Offering to all “low-income Canadians” and “fixed-income seniors” free “retail Internet access services” in accordance with the technical requirements of the federal “Connecting Families” program, but without regard to the household eligibility requirements thereof, upon an individual’s application to the program, and during the “pandemic and recovery period” and for 6 months thereafter.

Wireless Mobile Services



In relation to “wireless mobile services”, we demand:

For all customers:

1. Doubling of all “data caps” at no extra cost;
2. Prohibition of any “overage charge” for data use;
3. Prohibition of any price increases;
4. Prohibition of disconnection for non-payment, arrears or any other reasons without the explicit, individual, prior consent of the CRTC;

For “low-income” customers and “fixed-income seniors”:

5. All WSPs are required to offer to all “low-income” customers and “fixed-income seniors” the following “mobile wireless services” plan:
 - a. \$30/month POST-PAID plan;
 - b. Included: Phone number and voice calling (unlimited Canada-wide); texting (unlimited Canada-wide); Internet data (10 GB/month) at LTE (4G) speed.
 - c. No “data overage” charges; data may be throttled to speeds allowing minimum functions such as browsing, email and instant messaging after 10 GB data limit.
 - d. Term: 1 year. Cannot be combined with other offers (no bundling).
 - e. Device: Customer to bring own access device (BYOD) and no credit check, or, if customer is sold a new device by a WSP, the monthly cost of device is added to the \$30 plan and a credit check is allowed, as per the CRTC “Wireless Code”.
 - f. No changes to plan or additional add-ons or price increases (including no charges for customer service calls or charges for paper bills) during term of plan - which is 1 year.

*Note: defined terms are in “quotations”. Please see appendix for definitions.

Appendix – Definitions

“low-income Canadians” – means those persons with household income below the Low-Income Cut-Off (After Tax) (LICO-AT) (a variable measure based on household size and location). In a major city a four person household has a LICO-AT cut-off at about \$40,000;

“fixed-income seniors” – means persons aged 65 or older whose annual income is 50% or less than the Old Age Security (OAS) clawback amount (roughly \$40,000);

“pandemic and recovery period” – the time period defined as commencing 1 April 2020 and for the next 6 months thereafter, or upon the revocation of provincial or federal states of emergency, whichever is longer;

“data cap” means a clause of a “retail internet access service” or a “mobile wireless services” contract that defines a measurable limit of monthly data usage above which additional charges (an “overage charge”) or other restrictions may be added to base monthly service charges;

“overage charge” means a clause of a “retail internet access service” or a “mobile wireless services” contract that defines an additional cost for data use above base monthly service charges;

“retail internet access service” means access to data delivered electronically over wireline or wireless, usually to a residential setting (but not as part of a “mobile wireless phone service”);

“Connecting Families” means the federal government program designed to assist households with school aged children to access “retail internet access service” at a reduced rate;

“mobile wireless services” are those wireless telephony and data services intended to be used by an individual from a “mobile device” in accordance with a “wireless service contract” as defined in the CRTC “Wireless Code”;

“Wireless Code” means rules applicable to “mobile wireless services” in Canada published by that name by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).