



Telecom Order CRTC 2026-177

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Gatineau, 20 July 2026

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Broadband Fund – Acceptance of statement of work for Minto Communications Society’s transport fibre project in southern British Columbia

Background

1. In Telecom Decision 2025-152, the Commission awarded up to \$6,710,000 to Minto Communications Society (Minto) for its project to build approximately 51 kilometres of fibre infrastructure to bring transport services to the eligible community of Ogden, British Columbia, comprising approximately 415 households.
2. In accordance with the conditions of approval set out in Telecom Decision 2025-152, Minto confirmed in writing its acceptance of the funding award. On 20 February 2026, Minto submitted its completed statement of work for Commission approval.

Commission’s analysis

3. In 2023, the Downtown Lake wildfire burned approximately 9,500 hectares of land, destroyed more than 40 homes, and severely damaged a portion of Minto’s critical telecommunications infrastructure. The wildfire and resulting prolonged evacuation had lasting effects on the community of Ogden and created substantial operational and financial challenges for Minto, a non-profit, community-owned and operated organization.
4. The statement of work submitted by Minto regarding its project plan is consistent with its approved application, except for an increase in the project funding and changes to the network design. Minto indicated that these changes take into account the impacts of the wildfire on its operations and infrastructure.
5. The statement of work included a \$631,000 increase in project costs, as Minto submitted that expenses, such as those associated with its large subcontractors, have increased since it submitted its original application. These increases are driven by supply chain disruptions, current market conditions, and inflationary pressures. The Commission considers that Minto has sufficiently justified its increased project costs.
6. The statement of work also included changes to the network design due in part to the damage caused by the 2023 wildfire. The Commission considers that these changes will enable Minto to

improve network reliability and resiliency, operational efficiency, and infrastructure sustainability. The changes include a slight reduction in the fibre length, from 51 to 48 kilometres, while maintaining the originally planned coverage and targeted areas of the transport project.

7. Additionally, the statement of work included Minto's request of several exceptions to Telecom Regulatory Policy 2018-377, including that the Commission (i) allow Minto to submit claims more frequently, (ii) allow Minto to claim for costs incurred rather than costs paid, (iii) reduce the holdback amount from 10% to 5%, and (iv) reduce the holdback period from one year to six months.
8. The Commission analyzed supporting financial information provided by Minto in its statement of work. In the Commission's view, allowing Minto to submit claims for reimbursement more frequently would facilitate timely coordination of payments. The Commission considers that allowing Minto to submit more frequent claims would create minimal additional administrative burden and would significantly benefit Minto. This approach, taken on an exceptional basis, is appropriate given that Minto is a non-profit, community-owned and operated organization with limited financial resources.
9. The financial information provided also supported Minto's request to claim for costs incurred rather than costs paid. Although the flexibility to claim for incurred costs was introduced for future Broadband Fund projects in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-328, and does not automatically apply to projects approved under Telecom Regulatory Policy 2018-377, the Commission considers it appropriate to grant that flexibility to Minto in this instance because it would provide cash-flow relief.
10. In Telecom Regulatory Policy 2018-377, the Commission established a 10% holdback mechanism for projects funded through the Broadband Fund. The holdback is released after one year of service operation. Minto requested that the Commission reduce both the amount and the duration of the holdback. The Commission is of the view that maintaining the 10% holdback, while reducing the holdback period from one year to six months, will provide the necessary financial relief for Minto to successfully complete its transport project.
11. The Commission has considered Minto's requests in light of the significant impact of the wildfire on both the community of Ogden and Minto's telecommunications infrastructure and operations. Approving the statement of work will help address the critical need for connectivity in remote and difficult-to-access areas within the interior of northern British Columbia, including Ogden and the Upper Bridge River Valley, by upgrading Minto's network.

Conclusion

12. In light of the above, the Commission approves, by majority decision, the finalized statement of work, including the increase of \$631,000 to the approved funding amount, for a new total of \$7,341,000.

13. The Commission also approves, by majority decision and on an exceptional basis, Minto's requests to:
- submit Broadband Fund claims for reimbursement outside its regular quarterly submission schedule, as frequently as monthly;
 - claim for costs incurred rather than costs paid; and
 - allow the release of the holdback amount after six months of service, rather than one year, once Minto demonstrates fulfillment of the conditions of service outlined in the funding decision. The timeline for submitting the project holdback report would also be reduced to six months after the submission of the final implementation report.
14. The Commission denies, by majority decision, Minto's request to reduce the holdback amount from 10% to 5% percent.
15. The Commission will provide the statement of work separately and in confidence to Minto.
16. Provided that Minto complies with all conditions of funding set out in Telecom Decision 2025-152 and this order, the Commission will direct the Central Fund Administrator to make payments to Minto for its transport project. Failure to comply with these conditions could result in funding being delayed or not being disbursed.
17. The Commission reminds Minto of the following condition of funding set out in subparagraph 45(j) of Telecom Decision 2025-152: Where a risk of adverse impact on an Aboriginal or treaty right becomes known and a duty to consult exists, Minto must advise the Commission within **20 days** and submit a plan detailing the form and process for fulfilment of the duty. Release of any additional funding will be contingent on demonstration that any necessary consultations were held to the Crown's satisfaction.
18. Minto is required to submit quarterly progress reports and expense claims beginning no later than **19 October 2026**, or as otherwise approved by the Commission, until the project is completed.
19. Finally, in accordance with the Commission's determinations in Telecom Decision 2025-152, Minto must file for Commission approval a final implementation report within **90 days** of construction being complete and broadband services being offered. In the report, Minto must confirm that project construction is complete and that broadband services are being offered. The date on which the final implementation report is submitted will be considered the project completion date. Minto must also demonstrate in the report that the project has met the requirements set out in all related decisions, as per subparagraph 45(l) of Telecom Decision 2025-152. The approved project completion date as per Minto's statement of work is August 2028.

20. A joint dissenting opinion by Commissioners Ellen C. Desmond, K. C and Stéphanie Paquette is attached to this order.

Secretary General



Dissenting opinion of Commissioners Ellen C. Desmond, K. C and Stéphanie Paquette

Background

1. The Broadband Fund, first established by the Commission in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496 contributes to a broad effort by federal, provincial, and territorial governments to address the gap in connectivity in communities across Canada. It is completely funded by contributions made by large telecommunications service providers operating in Canada.
2. To ensure the prudent and appropriate administration of the Broadband Fund, the Commission has established both in Telecom Regulatory Policies 2016-496 and 2018-377 the framework and specific criteria that a project proponent must meet, to be eligible for the receipt of funds. These criteria are important. They ensure that certain standards are satisfied before large sums of money are disbursed.
3. Amongst other requirements, and as specifically stated by the Commission, a project proponent will be required to provide a minimum amount of investment in their project. **This must be more than a nominal amount and must be commensurate with the nature of the project** [emphasis added].¹ While the Commission has not specifically defined “nominal” or “commensurate” it is a factor to be considered as part of the project assessment.

The Minto Communications Society Project

4. Minto Communications Society (Minto) first applied to the Commission for funding in the amount of up to \$6,710,000 to build approximately 51 kilometres of fibre infrastructure to the eligible community of Ogden, British Columbia. This is a substantial project that could have a positive impact on the community and surrounding area by improving the reliability of internet services. We take no issue with the merits of the project itself.
5. However, when the Commission approved Minto’s project proposal in Telecom Decision 2025-152, the approval was subject to certain conditions. In particular, Minto was required to submit a statement of work in keeping with its project proposal and Minto was required to meet certain requirements as set out in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2018-377.
6. Minto did file a statement of work that largely aligned with its original application but with key changes. Our colleagues have now approved these changes, including a revised network design, an increase in project costs and a change to the holdback period. Many of these changes are

¹ Telecom Regulatory Policies 2016-496 and 2018-377, paragraphs 142-147, the Commission determined that applicants would be required to provide a minimum amount of investment in their project. The Commission stated that this amount must be more than a nominal amount and must be commensurate with the nature of the project.

considered exceptions to Telecom Regulatory Policy 2018-377. We do not take issue with either the new project costs or the exceptions that have been articulated in the majority decision.

Minto's contribution to the project

7. However, and with the greatest respect to our colleagues, the majority decision does not articulate or specifically consider whether Minto has made a minimum or commensurate amount of investment in its own project.
8. The Broadband Fund framework specifically requires that a project proponent make such an investment. There is good reason for this requirement; it not only demonstrates both a level of commitment to the project but also ensures that the proponent will have sufficient financial resources to successfully conclude construction. Having a solid financial footing and the necessary operational cashflow is critical before commencing construction. It protects the proponent, the contractors, subcontractors and even the intended beneficiaries. As noted above, the investment must be more than a nominal amount and must be commensurate with the nature of the project.
9. In this case, Minto's statement of work proposed to significantly reduce its contribution to the project. The amount now proposed is significantly different than was first approved in the project proposal. This is likely a result of the wildfire in 2023 that has damaged critical infrastructure and has created substantial financial challenges for Minto.
10. While the amount of the proposed contribution remains confidential, we are not satisfied that Minto has met the criteria set out in the Broadband Fund framework. In our view, Minto's proposed contribution to the project is not more than a nominal amount and is not commensurate with the nature of the project.
11. While this project could bring positive benefits to the community, and we understand the difficulties of operating a small non-profit community owned organization, Minto is required to invest in this project to ensure its successful conclusion. The Commission has a duty to ensure the Broadband Fund is administered in accordance with its framework. In this case, and without a nominal or commensurate contribution from Minto, we are not satisfied that the criteria have been met.

Related documents

- *Broadband Fund policy review – New policy for funding capital projects*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2024-328, 12 December 2024, as amended by Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2024-328-1, 9 April 2026
- *Broadband Fund – Project funding approval for Minto Communications Society's transport fibre project in southern British Columbia*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2025-152, 19 June 2025
- *Development of the Commission's Broadband Fund*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2018-377, 27 September 2018
- *Modern telecommunications services – The path forward for Canada's digital economy*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-496, 21 December 2016