

Introduction of 18 October Workshop on Comparative Perspectives on Broadband Regulation and Access, by Erik Bohlin

Hello everyone!

It is my great honor and privilege to welcome you all – Speakers, Guests, Students in presence and Webinar Participants – to today’s exciting workshop on the theme “Comparative Perspectives on Broadband Regulation and Access”, here at the Ivey Donald K. Johnson Centre.

My name is Erik Bohlin and I was recently appointed Professor at Ivey Business School, as the first Chair in Telecommunications Economics, Policy and Regulation.

Before continuing on the agenda and meeting details, let me pause for a moment and provide a Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinabek, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples.

We recognize and respect that these Nations have individual and unique cultures, customs, and languages. We recognize the Treaties that are specific to this area, and our responsibility to work towards achieving Truth and Reconciliation with our Indigenous communities.

It is my first time providing a Land Acknowledgement and as I am from Sweden, this is something that should be done in Sweden too, at times. For me, with some Sapmi/Lapland heritage on my mother’s side from the upper north of Sweden, it has a particular significance.

The Ivey Chair in Telecommunications Economics, Policy and Regulation was established last year and represents Ivey Business School’s ambitions to increasingly participate in public policy discourse, noting

that the it been active in several fronts, among them represented here by the co-organizer Lawrence National Centre for Management and Policy, and Director and Professor Romel Mostafa.

There are not many professorships around on this topic, in the world and this represents a unique opportunity for Ivey. This scientific field is growing, just exemplified by the sheer growth of papers submitted to main journal in the field, Telecommunications Policy. When I started as Editor in Chief for just about 15 years ago, we had about 150 submissions per year and today I noted that the last submission was nr 788! So, we may run over 1000 papers submitted this year, a record.

But while the field of telecommunications policy is growing and been around for about 50 years – the journal started in 1976 and one of the main annual conferences in 1972 – it is inter-disciplinary and reaching across several scientific fields, and then not part of the traditional academic topics. From an academic perspective, 50 years is a very young discipline! As Ivey is an innovative and leading business school, it is very fitting that it established this position.

The scientific publications on telecommunications policy in Canada are however limited, with a traditional focus on the US, EU, Asia with a more recent papers on Africa. The ambition is to stimulate more papers on Canada, also launching Special Issues for the journal that I am heading. Ivey will take a leadership here as well.

However, the practical field of Canadian of telecommunications policy is a very active policy domain and with both policy, public and media debated and coverage. The planning of the workshop was spurred by the initiatives this last winter and spring, starting with the Government Order to Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission on a Direction on a Renewed Approach to Telecommunications Policy¹ and the CRTC Notice of Hearing on the wholesale high-speed access service framework.² Furthermore, the CRTC has initiated a Broadband Fund Policy Review that will address the future objectives of broadband funding, beyond access toward affordability.³ These initiatives are expected to have long-term impacts on the functioning of the Canadian broadband markets, access, digital divide and the state of competition. This summer, the Competition Bureau has weighed in, to advice the CRTC on promoting wholesale internet competition.

Against this backdrop, it seemed fitting to initiate a workshop to allow for my international network of colleagues to bring in comparative perspectives on broadband policy, both access and digital divide, as this has been a long-standing topic elsewhere. This is what I could immediately at the start of my tenure. I will not try to review the state of play and action of the Canadian telecom policy landscape, as I am still very much a student of the particulars here in Canada.

As you will note in the agenda and bios therein, we have a collection of international experts that will address the audience today, and having the nice bios there, we will not repeat them in the session in order to manage the precious speaker time.

But the workshop plans were made possible by the acceptance of the Canadian government and agency representatives to join and speak, and I am so glad to welcome the CRTC Vice Chair Adam Scott and

¹ See <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/mobile-plans/en/order-issuing-direction-crtc-renewed-approach-telecommunications-policy> issued on 13 February, 2023

² See <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2023/2023-56.htm> issued on 8 March, 2023

³ See <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2023/2023-89.htm> issued on 23 March, 2023

Andre Arbour, the Director General of Telecommunications and Internet Policy, at the Innovation, Science, Economic Development Canada (ISED). Welcome!

With me, I have the Director of Lawrence National Center for Policy and Management, Professor Romel Mostafa, who kindly agreed to join and lead the final panel. The centre – LNC for short – also kindly agreed to provide sponsorship of the workshop which I am so grateful for.

My thanks also to the wonderful Ivey Events Staff, Ms. Laura McLeod, and LNC Staff Ms. Stephanie Scanlan for supporting the event so diligently and with expert competence. I am so relieved to work with you!

As to the order of the day, you have here the agenda.

<Note following:>

- Webinar in parallel, and recorded
- Students joining plus several government departments, but may not join all the time
- I will need to enforce time management because a compact schedule, and apologies for being rough, especially for the webinar speakers as they may not see my minute signs
- We save a lot of Q&A for the final plenary, and have devoted extensive time this important event
- We will have a longer coffee break and also a concluding cocktail reception

All are welcome!

And now I will give the floor to LNC Director Romel Mostafa, who will say a few words.