

Canadian Consumers Demand Internet, Wireless COVID-19 Relief

OTTAWA, April 7, 2020 – The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), ACORN Canada (ACORN) and the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) together called today for the Federal government, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and Canada’s Internet service providers (ISPs) and Wireless Service Providers (WSPs) to do more for Canadians. Their [list of demands](#) includes calls for unlimited internet access and low-income Internet and wireless plans to help all Canadians stay connected while isolating at home.

“Canadian government has told Canadians to stay at home which we are doing,” said John Lawford, Executive Director and General Counsel of PIAC. “But this means that Canadians must have affordable Internet and wireless service to survive and stay informed. We demand that the government, the CRTC and ISPs and WSPs do more for all Canadians,” he added.

While most ISPs and some WSPs have offered time-limited and service-specific measures to assist consumers with Internet and wireless connections, these are inconsistent between companies and there is a growing risk of Canadians being unable to afford these now essential lifelines to the outside world.

Marva Burnett, National President of ACORN, noted the extreme vulnerability of low-income Canadians: “More than anyone, low-income Canadians’ lives will be endangered if they cannot remain connected to the Internet, whether for lifesaving health information, application for government assistance, for news or for their children’s education.”

Trish McAuliffe, President, NPF stated seniors’ concerns: “Asking seniors to self-isolate and give up their support system makes them extremely dependent on cellphones and the Internet.” Noting the piecemeal programs offered by the ISPs and WSPs so far, she noted: “Some seniors need more time to adjust to their instant shift to life online and on a mobile phone. We must assure them that using this lifeline will not cause them financial hardship, that there are no hidden costs.”

“Internet and cellphone access is, in the shadow of the virus, now literally a matter of life and death. Our government and the CRTC cannot leave the industry to decide what is done,” added Lawford. “Canadians need to be connected to each other without any financial or other worries.”

PIAC-ACORN-NPF’s demands are found [here](#).

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