



TNC 2026-31

Call for comments – The fee structure and fee dispute mechanism at the Commission for Complaints for Telecommunications Services Inc.

April 24, 2026

Marc Morin
Secretary General
Canadian Radio-television and
Telecommunications Commission
Gatineau, QC K1A 0N2

Dear Mr Morin:

Re: Telecommunications Notice of Consultation 2026-31

1. The CCSA is a national organization representing small independent broadcasting distribution companies and ISPs that provide TV, internet, and telecommunications services to more than half a million Canadian residents and businesses in urban and rural communities, from coast to coast to coast.
2. In 2016, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (“Commission”) issued Broadcasting and Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-102. In paragraph 181, the Commission stated:

“There is insufficient information on the record of this proceeding to determine whether Commission-imposed obligations are appropriate at this time. At the next review of the CCTS, the Commission may explore this issue, if required, to determine if further action is warranted.”¹
3. A decade later, the evidentiary record has materially developed. There is no review for the CCTS scheduled according to the Commission’s Regulatory Plan,² yet data now demonstrates that the current complaint-based framework administered by the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services Inc. (“CCTS”) imposes disproportionate burdens on smaller telecommunications service providers (“TSPs”).
4. Costs associated with participation in the CCTS are distributed across significantly smaller customer bases for small TSPs. These providers also tend to generate comparatively fewer complaints and therefore do not maintain dedicated resources for complaint resolution. As a result, even a small number of complaints can impose a disproportionate operational burden. According to the CCTS 2024–2025 annual report, members of the Canadian Communication Systems Alliance (“CCSA”) collectively

¹ B&TD 2026-102: “Review of the structure and mandate of the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services Inc”. Para 181.

<https://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-102.htm>

² **Regulatory plan to modernize Canada’s broadcasting framework**

<https://web.crtc.gc.ca/eng/industr/modern/plan.htm>

accounted for 84 complaints out of more than 43,300 filed 'In-Scope' complaints during that period.

Executive Summary

5. The current regulatory classifications and metrics oversimplify the structure of the telecommunications market. Greater granularity would enable more proportionate and effective regulatory measures.

6. The CCSA advances nine recommendations addressing five principal issues:

- The need for more precise classification of TSPs;

Recommendation:

1. The Commission should adopt a three-tier classification framework.

- The disproportionate impact of the complaint-based fee structure;

Recommendation:

2. Where a small TSP objects to a complaint and that objection is upheld, any associated fees incurred by the TSP be reimbursed.

- The introduction of complaint thresholds and bulk processing mechanisms;

Recommendations:

3. The Commission should apply the \$25 million threshold established in Telecom Decision 2026-32 for determining small TSP status.

4. The CCTS should implement a complaint threshold system for small TSPs, whereby complaints are assessed in bulk once a defined annual threshold is reached.

5. The CCTS should forbear from investigating complaints against small TSPs where complaint volumes remain below the established threshold in a six-month CCTS reporting period.

6. Small TSPs should be exempt from annual CCTS fees. Medium TSPs should receive similar exemptions where complaint volumes remain consistently below threshold levels.

7. The CCTS should adopt proportional incentives for medium TSPs.

- Improvements to transparency and accessibility of CCTS processes

Recommendation:

8. The CCTS should publish a clear and accessible overview of its processes, including timelines, procedural steps, and potential costs.
- The establishment of clearer procedural timelines.

Recommendation:

9. Where a complaint threshold system is adopted, the CCTS should notify TSPs of complaint volumes on an ongoing basis and indicate when thresholds triggering review have been met.

and/or

All response timelines applicable to TSPs should be standardized at 30 days. The CCTS should also provide estimated timelines for investigations at the outset of each complaint.

Commission Questions Found in Appendix 1 of 2026-31

Impact of the Complaint-Based Fee Structure (Q1, Q2, Q2(a), Q2(b))

7. Before addressing the impacts of the CCTS on small service providers, we should first recognize a longstanding flaw within the system. The current binary distinction between “small” and “large” TSPs is inadequate and needs modernization.
8. In Question 3, the Commission defines small TSPs as those with revenues below \$10 million and large TSPs as those exceeding that threshold.³ The CCSA submits that this threshold is no longer appropriate.
9. In Telecom Decision 2026-32, the Commission established a revised threshold of \$25 million for small TSPs for contributions to the National Contribution Fund. The CCSA submits that this updated threshold should be applied consistently.
10. Furthermore, the absence of a “medium-sized” TSP category results in an incomplete and potentially misleading characterization of the market. TSPs with annual revenues ranging from \$25 million to \$250 million exhibit materially different operational and financial characteristics than both smaller and larger providers.

³ NoC 2026-31 **Call for comments – The fee structure and fee dispute mechanism at the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services Inc.**

Question 3. <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2026/2026-31.htm>

11. Operational capacity varies significantly across providers. Smaller TSPs often lack dedicated staff for regulatory compliance and complaint handling, whereas larger providers benefit from economies of scale that mitigate the impact of such processes.
12. The CCTS disproportionately impacts the smallest, most acutely, but it is still unduly impactful for TSPs that do not normally have complaints escalated to the CCTS. Economies of scale and complaints mean that TSPs (even those above the exemption threshold as established in 2026-32) can still be unfairly impacted.
13. As examples, two of CCSA's larger members have telecommunications revenues well within the proposed medium threshold, but the 2024-2025 CCTS Complaints record shows that they had seven and eight complaints, respectively. While they may have reached the size to afford dedicated resources to address complaints, their complaint numbers are so low as to make that resource allocation unreasonable.
14. CCSA believes that a service provider that has \$15M in revenue is distinctly different from one that has \$150M in revenue. Similarly, a TSP with \$80M in revenues is not reasonably comparable to a service provider with billions in annual revenue.
15. A proposal to create a category of medium TSPs offers the Commission a more accurate regulatory classification. This would be beneficial beyond just the scope of this process and provides an opportunity for more nuanced decisions by the Commission in the future.
16. The CCSA therefore recommends the adoption of a three-tier classification framework to better reflect market realities.

Recommendation 1:

The Commission should adopt a three-tier classification framework as follows:

- Small TSPs: up to \$25 million in annual revenues;
- Medium TSPs: \$25,000,001 to \$250 million; and
- Large TSPs: above \$250 million.

17. Directly addressing the current complaint-based fee structure that disproportionately affects small TSPs. Smaller providers typically operate with limited staff who perform multiple functions. When a complaint is escalated to the CCTS, significant internal resources must be diverted to address the matter, including reviewing documentation, understanding procedural requirements, and preparing responses.

18. As noted by the Commission in Telecom Decision 2026-30, paragraph 18:

“In response to the Commission’s RFI, the CCTS submitted data that indicates that complaints filed against small TSPs are typically not addressed in the earlier stages of the complaint-resolution process, which results in small TSPs having a higher average charge per complaint than large TSPs. The Commission is of the view that this may be due to small TSPs’ limited resources and staff.”⁴

19. Large TSPs, by contrast, distribute both financial and operational costs across a substantially larger customer base and maintain specialized staff dedicated to complaint resolution.
20. While the “financial viability” of the small TSP is situational, depending on several factors, the overall impact is still acutely felt; factors include: staff size, customer base, competition levels in the area, and ability to expand and grow. The current CCTS process is indiscriminate of those factors.
21. Another factor is that evidence from the CCTS’s annual reports shows that smaller TSPs tend to have fewer, if any, complaints against them that reach the CCTS level. As mentioned, TD 2026-30 para 18, the Commission correctly assesses some of the cost burdens that the CCTS has on small TSPs.
22. The complaint-based fee structure discourages disagreements over issues. While this might sound ideal, for all involved, from the TSP perspective, is this reasonable if the small TSP is ‘in the right’ of the dispute, as later confirmed by the CCTS? The TSP has effectively paid for its own vindication and nothing more. As a result, the CCTS can be used by customers to impact TSPs in unintended ways.
23. The system could be made fairer for small TSPs. If costs at the CCTS were refunded when a TSP was found ‘not to be at fault’ or to have taken all reasonable steps to prevent a dispute, small service providers would feel like the process was fairer.
24. Given the number of complaints against small TSPs, the loss of revenues for the CCTS would be insignificant, while the impact for those companies would be significant.

⁴ CRTC TD-2026-30. **InnSys Inc. – Application regarding the participation of small telecommunications service providers in the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services Inc.** para 18. <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2026/2026-30.htm>

Recommendation 2:

The Commission should amend the CCTS Procedural Code to require that, where a small TSP objects to a complaint and that objection is upheld pursuant to sections 9 and/or 12.3(a) of the CCTS Procedural Code (“the Code”), any associated fees incurred by the TSP be reimbursed.

Complaint Thresholds, Bulk Processing & Exemptions (Q3, Q4, Q4(a), Q4(b))

25. CCSA proposes that the introduction of complaint thresholds and bulk processing mechanisms would improve efficiency and proportionality to the system for small service providers and the CCTS.⁵ Section 4.1 of the Code states:

“The Commissioner shall investigate, assist in the resolution of, and make Recommendations and Decisions in relation to complaints with a view to determining whether the Participating Service Provider reasonably performed its obligations pursuant to the applicable contract and followed its usual policies and operating procedures in its dealings with the Customer.”⁶

26. The CCTS Procedural Code does not currently prescribe specific thresholds for initiating investigations. However, the Code emphasizes cost-effective and efficient processes according to section 2.2(g):

“...Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Commissioner shall follow cost-effective business practices in order to provide the services of his or her office in an economically efficient manner.”⁷

27. This aligns with Policy Direction SOR-2023-23 sections 2c and 2e.

“The Commission should consider how its decisions would promote competition, affordability, consumer interests and innovation, in particular the extent to which they would...

⁵ These proposals would be similarly beneficial to apply to the medium-sized TSPs that receive low complaint numbers.

⁶ CCTS procedural code found at: <https://www.ccts-cprst.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CCTS-Procedural-Code-Sep-2017.pdf>

⁷ Ibid.

(c) ensure that affordable access to high-quality, reliable and resilient telecommunications services is available in all regions of Canada, including rural areas, remote areas and Indigenous communities;

(e) reduce barriers to entry into the market and to competition for telecommunications service providers that are new, regional or smaller than the incumbent national service providers”⁸

28. For small TSPs, complaints should be assessed in aggregate once a defined semiannual threshold is established by the Commission.⁹ Complaints below that threshold could be deferred or subject to limited forbearance.

29. In application, if the threshold of complaints is reached, within a six-month window,¹⁰ all complaints should be reviewed by the CCTS as a bulk group of complaints. If the triggering threshold is not met before the six-month window concludes, a full review of all complaints will be treated as a bulk group of complaints at a six-month trigger automatically.

30. This could be achieved through minor amendments to the Code through either of two minor amendments: in section 6.10 by simply removing the language at the end:

“The Commissioner may consolidate, and take action with respect to, two or more complaints filed by or on behalf of two or more Customers relating to the same Participating Service Provider ~~and arising from the same transaction or occurrence or series of transactions or occurrences.~~”¹¹ [edited for clarification]

And/Or by removing subsection 6.12(a)

“... the Commissioner may take action with respect to a complaint filed by or on behalf of one or more Customers, provided that: (a) each Customer to which the complaint relates is specifically identified and has authorized that the complaint be filed on behalf of such Customer.”¹²

⁸ Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on a Renewed Approach to Telecommunications Policy <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2023-23/FullText.html>

⁹ CCSA would recommend an initial threshold of five complaints that could be reviewed and reconsidered if needed at a later date.

¹⁰ To coincide with the semiannual reports of the CCTS.

¹¹ CCTS procedural code found at: <https://www.ccts-cprst.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CCTS-Procedural-Code-May-2023.pdf>

¹² Ibid.

31. This would be in line with the CRTC's jurisdiction under section 34(1) and 34(2), and would require a minor amendment to the Code in section 3.1(c) to include:

“...(viii) claims of false and misleading advertising; (ix) privacy issues; (x) **and complaints below the pre-determined trigger amounts as established in ‘TD-2026-XX Appendix 1’.**”¹³ [emphasis added for clarity]

32. Alternatively, it could be added into section 10.3 as ‘10.3(c)’:

“The Commissioner shall take no action with respect to a complaint: until the pre-determined threshold of complaints against the Participating Service provider triggers as established in ‘TD-2026-XX Appendix 1 are reached. Then all actions shall be taken.”

33. As a result of CRTC Decision 2026-30, the CRTC has a duty to act under SOR/2023-23 section 9(c):

*“9 In order to foster fixed Internet competition that is sufficient to protect the interests of users, the Commission must: (c) adjust the framework as necessary and in a timely manner, including by making proactive adjustments.”*¹⁴

34. Simplifying regulatory interaction and compliance for service providers, where possible, fosters internet competition by reducing barriers, which ultimately is in the interests of users.

35. As noted in 2016-102:

*“Bell Canada and RCP cautioned that enforcing the compliance of small service providers might not be worth the associated costs and effort.”*¹⁵

36. Enforcing compliance can be burdensome for all involved, and it can be done more effectively given the competitive nature of the telecommunications market.

37. If the Commission implements the above proposal for small TSPs, medium-sized TSPs with consistently low complaint volumes could be considered for the same regulatory

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on a Renewed Approach to Telecommunications Policy <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2023-23/FullText.html>

¹⁵ B&TRP 2016-102 para 68. **“Review of the structure and mandate of the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services Inc.”** <https://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-102.htm>

considerations as small TSPs. This could apply to bulk thresholds and annual dues to the CCTS.¹⁶

38. These measures would better align regulatory obligations with actual complaint activity and incentivize effective customer service practices.

Recommendation 3:

The Commission should apply the \$25 million threshold established in Telecom Decision 2026-32 for determining small TSP status.

Recommendation 4:

The CCTS should implement a complaint threshold system for small TSPs, whereby complaints are assessed in bulk once a defined annual threshold is reached.

Recommendation 5:

The CCTS should forbear from investigating complaints against small TSPs where complaint volumes remain below the established threshold until the end of a CCTS reporting six-month period.

Recommendation 6:

Small TSPs should be exempt from annual CCTS fees. Medium TSPs should receive similar exemptions where complaint volumes remain consistently below threshold levels.

Recommendation 7:

The CCTS should adopt proportional incentives for medium TSPs, including access to bulk processing and exemptions where complaint volumes remain low.

Transparency and Accessibility (Q5)

39. The CCSA acknowledges recent improvements by the CCTS, including the removal of charges for complaints determined to Out of Scope. However, the CCTS website does not provide sufficiently clear or accessible information regarding its processes, timelines, and fee structures.
40. While the Procedural Code and Annotated Guide are available, they are not presented in a manner that facilitates ease of understanding for first-time users. Greater transparency would improve both compliance and efficiency.

¹⁶ CCSA recognizes that this proposal may be more in scope within a broader review of the CCTS.

Recommendation 8:

The CCTS should publish a clear and accessible overview of its processes, including timelines, procedural steps, and potential costs, with appropriate references to the Procedural Code and Annotated Guide.

Procedural Timelines (Q6, 6a)

41. The current complaint process does not adequately account for the limited capacity of small TSPs.
42. Certain provisions impose relatively short response timelines on all TSPs, while corresponding timelines applicable to the CCTS remain undefined or discretionary.¹⁷
43. This imbalance may create operational challenges for smaller providers. Greater clarity and consistency in timelines would improve procedural fairness and efficiency.

Recommendation 9:

Where a complaint threshold system is adopted, the CCTS should notify TSPs of complaint volumes on an ongoing basis and indicate when thresholds triggering review have been met.

and/or

Alternatively, all response timelines applicable to TSPs should be standardized at 30 days. The CCTS should also provide estimated timelines for investigations at the outset of each complaint.

Fee Dispute Mechanisms (Q7)

44. The CCSA reserves the right to provide further submissions on this issue of a fee dispute mechanism as the record develops, but has no comments at this time.

Participation of Small TSPs in Regulatory Processes

45. Small TSPs often face challenges participating in regulatory proceedings due to resource constraints. Processes, regardless of how thorough, are often missed by small service providers, even if involvement is to their benefit.

¹⁷ Sections 6.6-6.7, 7.1, 11.5, and 12.3 found here: <https://www.ccts-cprst.ca/codes-stats-and-reports/procedural-code/>

46. While the CCTS did hold an extensive process for review of its own methodologies (as referenced in paragraph 32 of TD 2026-30), the absence of submissions from some smaller providers should not be interpreted as agreement with or indifference to proposed measures.
47. This is not the fault of any regulatory authority, and there is no easy redress, but CCSA urges all regulators to be mindful that silence in the face of regulatory process should not be assumed to mean disinterest.

Conclusion

48. The CCSA's proposals are intended to refine and modernize the existing CCTS framework in light of current market conditions.
49. The Commission considered the impact on small TSPs in paragraph 40 of 2016-102:
“With respect to the complaint trigger, the value of mandating the immediate participation of all small TSPs must be weighed against the administrative burden the CCTS would face in enrolling these TSPs, along with the additional costs and administrative burden small TSPs would incur as a result of a requirement to immediately participate in the CCTS.”¹⁸
50. The CCSA is not proposing that the Commission unscramble the omelet; we are simply asking that it be seasoned differently.
51. The CCSA thanks the Commission for its consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

John P. Roman
Director Legal & Regulatory
Canadian Communications Systems Alliance.

¹⁸ Op. Cit. para 40.