



To: The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

May 12, 2022

Dear Minister Champagne:

On behalf of OpenMedia, a community-driven organization that works to keep the Internet open, affordable, and surveillance-free, we urge you to stand with our Competition Bureau and Parliament's bipartisan INDU committee by blocking Rogers from buying Shaw under any circumstances.

With or without Freedom Mobile included, the Rogers-Shaw buyout is bad for people in Canada and must be blocked. We know that the increased telecom prices that will come from this deal are the last thing our country needs, particularly with the rising costs of food, gas and other basic goods. All this, while we continue to pay some of the highest connectivity prices in the world.

As Innovation Minister, you can and must take a stand. By speaking out and insisting that wireless spectrum owned by Shaw must stay with Shaw, and may not be divested to Rogers or any other party, you can leave the Rogers-Shaw buyout dead in the water today.

Knowing that you have publicly committed to making ["every effort"](#) to ensure the affordability of telecom services, people in Canada are paying close attention to whether you will keep your word. The eyes of the nation are on you, Minister Champagne; will you stand up for the best interests of Canadians, or side with Big Telecom's profits in a time of inflation and uncertainty?

"We are a family with 2 students away from home attending university/college and 1 in grade 12. We have tried to manage a family plan with 5 cell phones, plus internet. With so many essential items such as groceries and gasoline increasing in price, the Rogers-Shaw buyout will only increase [our] financial burdens." - Heather A., an OpenMedia community member

People in Canada, our MPs, and the Competition Bureau have all spoken out deafeningly loud: the government must block any and all versions of this buyout. Since March 2021, key developments have included (please see Appendix A for a full list):

- In collaboration with civil society organizations ACORN Canada, Leadnow, and North99, in May 2021 OpenMedia [delivered over 62,000 petition signatures](#) calling on you, the Competition Bureau, and the Prime Minister to block Rogers-Shaw entirely. In March 2022, OpenMedia delivered [11,000 more voices](#) to you urging you to stop the deal.
- In September 2021, **over 6,000 members of the OpenMedia community emailed their local MP candidates** indicating that blocking Rogers-Shaw was one of their top voting priorities for the 2021 federal election;



- In March 2022, the bipartisan INDU committee of our MPs [released a report](#) confirming that the Rogers/Shaw buyout is not in the best interest of Canadians, and must be blocked under any circumstances;
- In May 2022, the Competition Bureau [announced](#) it is seeking to block the entire Rogers-Shaw buyout, stating that removing Freedom Mobile from the deal is [not enough](#) to protect competition;
- This week, over 4,000 members of the OpenMedia community — and counting — have already [emailed their MPs](#) urging them to call on you to outright block Rogers-Shaw, including in the case that Freedom Mobile is divested from the deal.

“Our internet costs are already INCREASING over each of the past 5 years, despite your commitment to REDUCE our internet rates. This proposal will clearly make this trend worse - more costly for my family.” - Jim R., an OpenMedia community member

The proposed Rogers-Shaw acquisition presents a massive threat to both cell phone and home Internet affordability, choice, and innovation in Canada — even in the case that Freedom Mobile, Shaw’s cell phone carrier, is sold to a third party as part of the deal.

In light of the Competition Bureau’s Request for Information on Rogers-Shaw in October 2021, our community chose to share their individual experiences and concerns about how Rogers-Shaw will affect them. OpenMedia collected these unique comments as well as captured responses to a number of relevant questions. At a glance, respondents anticipate the affordability harms of the buyout will result in greater financial burden on their household (95.23%), difficulty affording other essential expenses (64.29%), and needing to downgrade to a cheaper, but slower, home Internet plan (66.03%). For more insights, please see Appendix B.

“The lessening of competition will certainly cost me more on my communication bill. The TV, internet and phone are more than entertainment to me. They’re my lifeline. They keep me sane. They are already overpriced. I’ve had to downgrade my services as they were already unaffordable.” - Stephen C., an OpenMedia community member

Minister Champagne, hundreds of thousands of Canadian voters are watching to see what you will do next on Rogers-Shaw. **Will you choose to side with Canadians — or with Big Telecom?**

Sincerely,

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OpenMedia is a community-based organization that works to keep the Internet open, affordable, and surveillance free.



Appendices: Open letter calling on Minister Champagne to block Rogers-Shaw under any circumstances

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Appendix A — Developments and grassroots advocacy concerning Rogers-Shaw

Since Rogers' announcement of its intentions to buy Shaw in March 2021:

- In collaboration with civil society organizations ACORN Canada, Leadnow, and North99, in May 2021 OpenMedia [delivered](#) over **62,000 petition signatures** calling on you, the Competition Bureau, and Prime Minister Trudeau to block Rogers-Shaw entirely;
- In May 2021, **7 civil society organizations issued a [joint statement](#)** calling on the federal government to step in and stop the buyout;
- In September 2021, **over 6,000 members of the OpenMedia community emailed their local MP candidates** indicating that blocking Rogers-Shaw was one of their top voting priorities for the 2021 federal election;
- In February 2022, **OpenMedia took our community's voices to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage**, where [we testified](#) that the buyout should not be allowed under any circumstances in order to protect local news;
- In March 2022, **the bipartisan INDU committee of our MPs [released a report](#)** confirming the view of consumer advocates, small Internet providers, and industry experts: the Rogers/Shaw buyout is not in the best interest of Canadians, and must be blocked under any circumstances;
- In March 2022, OpenMedia [delivered](#) over **11,000 voices** to you, including thousands of individual impact stories, all urging you to stop the deal entirely;
- In May 2022, **the Competition Bureau [announced](#) it is seeking to block the entire Rogers-Shaw buyout**, stating that removing Freedom Mobile from the deal is [not enough](#) to protect competition;
- **This week, over 4,000 members of the OpenMedia community — and counting — have already [emailed their MPs](#)** urging them to call on you to outright block Rogers-Shaw, including in the case that Freedom Mobile is divested from the deal.



Appendix B — OpenMedia 2021 Community Survey: How will Rogers-Shaw affect you?

If the Rogers-Shaw buyout is approved, our respondents (6,458) are concerned:

- Cell phone bills will get more expensive (**84.70%**)
- Home Internet bills will get more expensive (**87.52%**)
- There will be fewer cell phone carriers available to choose from (**86.85%**)
- There will be fewer home Internet providers available to choose from (**87.74%**)

If prices for cell phone and Internet services were to increase, respondents anticipate:

- Greater financial burden on their household (**95.23%**)
- Difficulty affording other essential expenses (**64.29%**)
- Downgrading to a cheaper, but slower, home Internet plan (**66.03%**)
- Downgrading to a cheaper cell phone plan, but with less data (**62.31%**)

41.62% of our respondents identified as Seniors, and **26.77%** identified as Low-income.