

Introduction of 14 May Workshop on Building Resilience in Telecommunications – In Canada and Beyond

by Erik Bohlin, Ivey Business School

Hello everyone!

It is my great honor and privilege to welcome you all – Speakers, Guests, Students in presence and Webinar Participants – to today’s workshop on the theme “Building Resilience in Telecommunications – In Canada and Beyond”, here at the Ivey Donald K. Johnson Centre.

My name is Erik Bohlin and I am a Professor at Ivey Business School, Chair in Telecommunications Economics, Policy and Regulation. And this is the second workshop that is co-organized by me and Romel Mostafa, Director of Lawrence National Centre for Policy and Management at Ivey Business School. We are intending to build a series of policy relevant workshops, over several years.

But before continuing the agenda and meeting details, let me pause for a moment for Land Acknowledgement. At Ivey Business School, we have started to use the Land Acknowledgements as a moment to make some personal reflections by faculty in our formal Business Councils and this proved very meaningful.

And when I read this Land Acknowledgement last time, my voice trembled, and emotions came. I had to pause for a moment and had some difficulty to continue. I think this happened because I said that such acknowledgements are needed also in Sweden where I come from. That emotion came as a surprise and overtook me some, and I suppose that it happened because my mother came from the very north of Sweden.

And if you are interested to know more about Sweden and tensions between the Samic community and other Swedes, I can recommend the new film “Stolen” which is available on one of the major streaming platforms, and has received many good reviews, with amazing images, villains and heroes, based on a book and real-life events.

Now turning to our meeting and agenda: Our workshop is called Building Resilience in *Telecommunications*. This is an important starting point. We are addressing a very wide problem of resilience, with a focus on telecommunications. And resilience can be defined variously, but fundamentally some strength to withstand various types of threats, natural and/or malign.

Starting with research, the scientific field of telecommunications policy received prominence some fifty years ago, but there is little conceptual and empirical research on the interaction between resilience and telecommunications policy. This is despite the obvious fact that resilience is a topic of increasing importance for our societies and for telecommunications policy both in practice and research.

An important purpose of the workshop is to bring together practical partners and researchers to discuss issues of common concern, to develop both a research agenda on resilient telecommunications policy, and also to discuss policy and strategy options. To that end, a program has been devised with international experts both from practice and academia, together with Canadian government and industry.

Let me give a glance of program as how it relates to concern in Canada.

The Parliament is currently debating Bill C-26 which will among other items revise the 1993 Canadian Telecom Act and provide a new fundamental objective related to resilience.¹ Moreover, ISED – Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada – has promoted reliable telecom services for years, with many initiatives. Last year, ISED provided the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) with an explicit goal on resilience.²

Thankfully, CRTC Vice Chair Adam Scott and ISED Director General Andre Arbour are with us today and will present perspectives from their respective organizations.

The Canadian telecom industry is investing heavily in resilience, and we will hear an interesting and engaging exposition by Vice President Phil Moore of Telus on strategies and investments to secure resilient networks. The efforts are truly multi-dimensional, encompassing communities, human resources, and infrastructures.

Our workshop will also include international experience and perspectives. We will hear an engaging story of the Maui wildfires by Professor Jenifer Sunrise Winter, University of Hawai'i, and the telecom struggles in this overwhelming firestorm. We will hear from Professor Seongcheol Kim, Korea University, of the manifold dimensions of network resilience on the Korean peninsula, with both intense cyber threats, network outages and climate change impacts. We will hear from Georg Serentschy, Managing Partner, a kind of global overview on resilience and network security, building on his recent report. Professor Eli Noam of Columbia Business School will provide a novel perspective on emergency communications, building on his long-standing knowledge of telecom economics and regulation.

Taken together, I expect that our workshop will provide both practical and research implications. The workshop will illustrate the needs for new institutional arrangements, holistic approach and partnerships between government and industry.

But our workshop will not just be presentations - we will have the opportunity to raise questions after each presentation, plus participate in an engaging final panel discussion!

To that end, it is my privilege to introduce to you Professor Romel Mostafa, Director of the Lawrence National Centre for Policy and Management. Romel will both lead the final panel discussion and lead as Moderator during the day. I admire the strong presence and clever way of capturing the moment which Romel possesses. It is not for nothing that Romel has been selected Teacher of the Year, time and time again, by the students!

I am also delighted to introduce to you Dr. Jieun Park, Senior Researcher at Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST), as Rapporteur. She will provide an outside perspective and raise questions to Romel and provide a summary of the day toward the end. In the EU, the Rapporteur has a significant role both for the European Commission meetings and European Parliament Committees, and I am very glad that Dr. Park has agreed to join us and give us her reflections!

¹ Bill C-26: An Act Respecting Cyber Security, Amending the Telecommunications Act and Making Consequential Amendments to Other Acts.

² "To 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".

An administrative point is that two presentations will be virtual, and we are running in parallel a webinar for a few participants who otherwise could not join. The webinar function also allows for recording.

The room is suitable for questions from the audience, and we encourage you to ask questions. We have a microphone in case of need, but the room microphones at the ceiling will take care of audio to the webinar participants.

Some concluding thoughts: while this workshop will generate a research agenda for telecommunications policy, there are also elephants in the room. Big Tech has an increasingly important role for resilience, not only for applications but also for big infrastructure investments in data centers. Moreover, Non-terrestrial Networks such as satellite have increasingly started to capture our imagination and attention. To these topics, we will return to with greater focus at future points in time!

Let me finally acknowledge and thank the wonderful support from Ms. Laura McLeod, Ms. Stephanie Scanlan, Ms Vicki Zielinski, Mr Ivan Langrish and Ms. Caitie Spears for supporting the event so diligently and with expert competence. I am so relieved to work with you!