

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

***Consultation on the Revisions to the 2500-2690 MHz
Band Plan***

Notice No. SPB-002-26

**Reply Comments
of
Xplore Inc.**

April 28, 2026

Introduction and Executive Summary

1. Xplore Inc., on behalf of itself and its affiliate Xplore Spectrum 1 Network Limited Partnership (together, “**Xplore**”), has reviewed comments filed by interveners to SPB-002-26, *Consultation on the Revisions to the 2500-2690 MHz Band Plan* (“**Consultation**”), initiated by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (“**ISED**”)¹ and is pleased to provide its Reply Comments.
2. In the Consultation, ISED is proposing to adopt a new band plan for the 2500-2690 MHz frequency band (“**2500 MHz Band**”). Currently, the 2500 MHz Band comprises the following discrete bands:
 1. **Band 7**: 2500-2570 MHz paired with 2620-2690 MHz for FDD operations
 2. **Band 38**: 2570-2620 MHz, which is allocated for TDD operations
 3. **Band 41**: Encompasses the entire range of the 2500 MHz Band.
3. Under a revised band plan, ISED would permit TDD operations across the entire 2500 MHz Band, instead of only within Band 38. ISED is specifically seeking comments on whether a new band plan should be adopted, and if so, how a transition could be structured to accommodate investments made by existing operators while bringing new benefits to Canadians.²
4. Xplore does not oppose adopting a new band plan, as we understand that the current band plan is subject to interference concerns along the Canada-US border and is hindering the efficient deployment of spectrum resources to serve Canadians. However, Xplore strongly emphasizes the need for ISED to accommodate the investments that have been made by existing operators as part of a transition plan.
5. Xplore is a significant holder of 2500 MHz Band licences. However, in 37 of the 38 tier 3 serving areas we operate in, our licences are allocated within Band 38 for TDD operations and we are not experiencing any interference concerns. To be clear, Xplore does not stand to benefit from a new band plan and this proceeding only risks imposing financial harm on our business. Indeed, in the 16 tier 3 areas identified by providers as needing to be fragmented to ensure contiguity,³ Xplore is the sole Band 38 licence holder in 12 of these areas. Accordingly, if ISED adopts a new band plan, Xplore strongly urges ISED to adopt a transition plan that prevents imposing material harm.
6. A new band plan must be designed to promote the assignment of contiguous spectrum, but, as parties have noted, contiguous assignments are not possible unless existing Band 38 operators are assigned new frequencies that are at least partly outside Band 38. The radios

¹ Published in *Canada Gazette*, Part 1, Volume 160, Number 7, on February 14, 2026.

² *Consultation on the Revisions to the 2500-2690 MHz Band Plan* (ISED), SPB-002-26 (January 2026).

³ See, e.g. Cogeco Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at Q4c.

that we have deployed, and continue to deploy, cannot function outside Band 38. Therefore, we will need to replace these radios in order to implement the new band plan. It is thus of critical importance to our business, including the communities and customers we serve, that the transition timeline accommodates the natural lifespan of our Band 38 radios.

7. In these Reply Comments, we address comments made by parties and provide ISED with three key recommendations to guide the structure of a transition plan:
 1. **Recommendation 1:** No licensees should lose access to spectrum because ISED adopts a new band plan, including allocated spectrum associated with a guard band;
 2. **Recommendation 2:** ISED should adopt the phased transition timeline supported by numerous parties, with three discrete regions transitioning in 2033, 2035 and 2036. The transition should flexibly accommodate the investment cycles of operators by:
 - a) Adopting 5-year protection periods for existing Band 38 operators; and
 - b) Permitting Band 41 operators to deploy TDD radios prior to the transition date, so long as this does not cause interference to other operators.
 3. **Recommendation 3:** Frequency re-assignments should take place at the end of the protection periods to ensure licensees receive contiguous spectrum blocks. Re-assignments should be determined through industry-led negotiations backstopped by ISED oversight.

Recommendations for the transition to a new 2500 MHz band plan

Recommendation 1: Operators should not lose spectrum as a result of the transition

8. As a preliminary matter of fundamental importance, Xplore submits that no licensee should lose access to spectrum as a result of a transition to a new band plan. All existing licensees should retain an amount of spectrum that is equal to their current holdings following the transition. An existing licensee's holdings should include any guard band spectrum that has been allocated.
9. Xplore notes that certain parties, namely TELUS and Rogers, have made proposals concerning the treatment of guard band spectrum.
10. TELUS highlights that current guard bands represent two blocks of 5 MHz of spectrum and proposes that these blocks should be united into a single 10 MHz block. TELUS further proposes that the 10 MHz may be allocated across different parties.⁴ Xplore supports this

⁴ TELUS Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para. 32.

proposal, provided that any guard band spectrum that has been allocated to an existing licensee will not be taken away from the licensee.

11. In contrast to TELUS, Rogers has argued that allocated guard band frequencies should be surrendered by existing licensees and re-allocated through an auction process.⁵ Xplore strongly opposes this proposal. Where Xplore has been allocated guard band spectrum, it has purchased this spectrum and there is no policy rationale to justify the surrender of these spectrum assets.
12. Xplore further agrees with TELUS⁶ and Nokia⁷ that the band plan should be expanded to include 2496-2500 MHz to ensure alignment with U.S. and international band plans, allowing providers to leverage the U.S. technological ecosystem.

Recommendation 2: A flexible transition framework with protection periods for existing Band 38 operators is necessary

13. Having reviewed submissions from interested parties, Xplore notes that there is a significant degree of consensus from operators surrounding a transition to a new 2500 MHz band plan. The following positions are widely supported across industry members:
 1. ISED should adopt a new band plan for the 2500 MHz Band that permits TDD operations across the band.
 2. The transition process should provide existing licensees with contiguous spectrum blocks to the greatest extent possible.
 3. The transition should be implemented in a manner that allows parties to naturally deploy new radios without disrupting their investment cycles.
14. Xplore entirely agrees with these positions. What is key to the successful implementation of these objectives is a flexible transition plan that accommodates the investment cycles of various service providers.
15. All service providers are concerned about the costs associated with transitioning to a new 2500 MHz band plan, as all service providers will need to deploy new radios as part of the transition:
 1. Existing Band 7 operators will need to deploy new radios that support TDD functions; and,
 2. Existing Band 38 operators, like Xplore, will need to deploy radios that can support frequencies outside Band 38 in order to allow for contiguity within the band, as

⁵ Rogers Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para. 25.

⁶ TELUS Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 32(a).

⁷ Nokia Canada Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at 2.

contiguous spectrum allocations are not possible unless existing TDD operators are required to shift at least in part to frequencies outside Band 38.⁸

16. All parties are seeking to deploy new radio equipment as part of their natural investment cycles. As stated by Bell Mobility:

“The transition process must be structured over a sufficiently long timeframe to allow licensees to incorporate the necessary equipment replacements into their regular network refresh cycles. Aligning the transition with planned capital investment programs, rather than requiring accelerated or out-of-cycle capital expenditure, will reduce the financial burden on mobile network operators and support continued investment in network quality and coverage for Canadians.”

17. Several providers have noted the potential significant financial burden associated with capital investment outside of typical equipment replacement cycles. TELUS notes that “migrating from FDD to TDD is a complex undertaking involving hundreds of millions of dollars in collective industry costs, including the development of new radio equipment, replacement of existing FDD radios and other operational expenses associated with a truck roll and site works at nearly every site in multiple networks.”⁹ Similarly, Eastlink identified wasted resources, additional network design and implementation costs, and reduced future investments as real risks associated with radio replacements resulting from this proposed band plan revision.¹⁰

18. Radios are deployed to last a minimum of 10 years. Given that each operator has its own investment cycle, some favour an earlier transition and others, like Xplore, require more time before replacing equipment.

19. In light of this, Xplore submits that ISED should implement a flexible transition framework that seeks to accommodate the needs of all parties. As a general framework for transition, Xplore notes that there is clear consensus from operators that a phased approach beginning in 2033, with subsequent phases taking place in 2035 and 2036 would accommodate the investment cycles of most operators and provide the necessary time for ISED to complete further consultation and develop new equipment standards, and allow for manufacturers to certify radios in Canada.¹¹

20. While Cogeco argues that “[a] transition starting in 2028 provides a reasonable window for investments from licence holders from the 2014 auction to reach the end of their useful life before they are replaced with new TDD-only hardware,”¹² they ignore the realities that providers are upgrading and deploying radios throughout the licence term to, among other

⁸ SaskTel Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para. 26.

⁹ TELUS Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 28.

¹⁰ Eastlink Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 10.

¹¹ See, e.g. Bell Mobility Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 15; Sasktel Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 17.

¹² Cogeco Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at Q2.

things, comply with government regulations requiring elimination of Huawei and ZTE equipment, or upgrading to the latest 5G technologies.

21. As a result, Xplore recommends that ISED enhance this transition framework to accommodate the needs of individual service providers. Specifically, Xplore recommends that this framework be enhanced in two ways:
1. ISED should implement a 5-year protection period that would allow existing Band 38 operators to continue operating their current radios for 5 years following transition;
 2. ISED should permit existing Band 7 operators to begin TDD operations prior to transition, provided that the TDD operations do not interfere with other operators.
22. As we explained in our comments, we are actively deploying 2500 MHz radios exclusive to Band 38 in order to fulfil our commitments under federal/provincial broadband funding programs, and as part of our work to remove Huawei/ZTE equipment from our network by the December 31, 2027 deadline established by ISED.
23. If we are forced to replace these radios again beginning in 2033, this will require us to discontinue our radios well before the end of our natural investment cycle. The pre-mature replacement of this equipment could cause us to incur additional costs over \$150 million.
24. In order to accommodate the investments that we are making in our current spectrum assets, we ask that ISED institute 5-year protection periods for existing Band 38 operators to allow providers, like Xplore, to continue operating existing equipment using their current frequency assignments until the end of the protection period. Our proposed transition, which replicates the consensus position put forward by numerous parties, and illustrates the protection periods we are seeking, is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Proposed Transition Timeline and Protection Periods for Existing Band 38 TDD Deployments

Phase #	Geography (Tier 3 areas)	Transition Date	Protection Period for Existing Band 38 TDD Deployments
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario • Quebec (minus Gaspé) 	May 1, 2033	April 30, 2038
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newfoundland and Labrador • Nova Scotia • Prince Edward Island • New Brunswick • Quebec (Gaspé only) • Manitoba • Saskatchewan • Alberta 	May 1, 2035	April 30, 2040

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Columbia 		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yukon • Northwest Territories • Nunavut 	May 1, 2036	April 30, 2041

25. Xplore is not the only party requesting that protection periods be implemented by ISED. SaskTel,¹³ ECOTEL¹⁴ and Cogeco¹⁵ have each submitted that Band 38 operators should be protected to continue using their existing radios until the end of their useful life. As noted by these parties, implementing a protection period will not prevent Band 7 operators from deploying new TDD radios; it will merely delay the re-assignment of spectrum.

(a) As noted by SaskTel:

“Appropriate measures will need to be taken to not displace existing TDD operators in band 38 who have no current band 7 holdings. These licensees will be able to operate their existing TDD hardware beyond the transition date without any negative impacts to themselves or other adjacent operators. This will prevent some licensees from having a contiguous block of B41 spectrum in some areas due to the B38 operator not being able to move. Due to this, it is recommended that ISED allow the licensee to continue to operate in B38 for 5 years after the transition. At the end of the 5-year window the block assignments would be rearranged to allow all operators to have contiguous spectrum in the band.”¹⁶

(b) ECOTEL has similarly supported delaying the frequency re-assignment process for a period of 5 years to accommodate existing Band 38 operators:

“ECOTEL is of the view that incumbent Band 38 licensees should, where they so elect, be afforded priority access to the Band 38 portion of the post-transition band plan. This approach would enable the continued use of existing radio equipment for the duration of its remaining useful life.

To accommodate incumbent Band 38 licensees, it may be necessary—depending on the number of such licensees—to implement an interim transition phase during which certain Band 41 licensees may temporarily hold non-contiguous spectrum blocks. This transitional arrangement should be time-limited, with a maximum duration of five (5) years.”¹⁷

(c) Cogeco equally supports a 5-year protection period:

¹³ SaskTel Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 15.

¹⁴ ECOTEL Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at paras 27-28.

¹⁵ Cogeco Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at Q4c.

¹⁶ SaskTel Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 15.

¹⁷ ECOTEL Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at paras 27-28.

“... Further, it is recommended that Band 38 operators have a 5-year window after the transition date where they can continue to operate their Band 38 hardware. After the 5-year window the blocks in the tier 3 area should be rearranged to eliminate the fragmentation and allow all operators contiguous spectrum within the new Band 41. At this time the Band 38 operators would need to replace their hardware to continue using their new spectrum assignment outside of Band 38.”¹⁸

26. Xplore submits that delaying the frequency re-assignment process for a period of 5 years is a reasonable compromise that would allow Band 7 operators to migrate to TDD operations beginning in 2033, while preventing existing Band 38 operators from experiencing avoidable financial harm.
27. In contrast to Xplore, other parties have proposed that operators should be permitted to begin TDD operations within Band 7 before transition, provided that new TDD usage does not interfere with other operators. In particular, Bell Mobility has proposed that FDD operators be permitted to use TDD within the downlink frequencies as supplemental downlink (with no uplink use) until the transition deadline,¹⁹ and Cogeco has also supported the early use of Band 41-capable equipment where there are no interference concerns.²⁰ Xplore has no objections to proposals of this nature and supports ISED’s adoption of a flexible approach that facilitates a transition to a new and plan for all parties.

Recommendation 3: Frequency re-assignments should take place at the end of the protection periods and be coordinated through industry-led negotiations backstopped by ISED oversight

28. Contiguity is an essential element of successful transition to a new band plan. However, as noted by parties, in the majority of tier 3 areas, all existing operators can receive contiguous assignments to accommodate their current holdings.²¹ In light of this, there is a significant degree of consensus that ISED should allow operators to negotiate new frequency assignments. Xplore supports an industry-led approach to frequency assignments.
29. Xplore does recommend, however, that ISED provide oversight over these negotiations, to ensure fair outcomes. In order to promote fair negotiated outcomes, ISED should mandate that all operators are to be allocated an amount of contiguous bandwidth that is no less than what the operator held prior to the transition. To the extent that this is not possible, and parties are not able to agree on new frequency assignments, operators should be able to engage ISED assistance to set frequency assignments.
30. Rogers is the only party that has suggested that an alternate assignment method should be used, namely, an assignment auction. Xplore strongly opposes this proposal. Rogers suggests that existing Band 38 operators, like Xplore, should be displaced from their spectrum

¹⁸ Cogeco Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at Q4c.

¹⁹ Bell Mobility Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 27.

²⁰ Cogeco Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at Q2.

²¹ See, e.g. Sasktel Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 25; Bell Mobility Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 25, Rogers Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at E4.

and forced to incur significant financial harm from the early retirement Band 38 radio equipment. Rogers proposes that, if Band 38 operators wish to continue to use Band 38 frequencies, they can express this preference by bidding for these frequencies in an auction.²²

31. Xplore submits that this proposal is inappropriate and should be rejected. Given that Xplore has exclusively deployed TDD equipment within Band 38, Xplore will not experience any benefits from the transition process and only risks financial harm from this process. Rogers implicitly recognizes this financial harm, but then proposes that it can be mitigated by requiring Band 38 operators to pay to continue using their current spectrum through an assignment auction.²³ Rogers' proposal simply exchanges one form of financial harm for another.
32. Accordingly, Xplore submits that Rogers' proposal should be rejected and instead ISED should protect the operations of Band 38 licensees through a 5-year protection period, as described above. At the end of the protection period, frequency assignments should be set through industry-led negotiations.
33. Although protection periods are critically important to Band 38 operators, Xplore submits that operators should be permitted to negotiate transitions before the end of a protection period. Rogers²⁴ and Cogeco²⁵ have both suggested that financial compensation could potentially be provided to existing Band 38 operators in order to facilitate the early retirement of Band 38 radios. Xplore does not object to these proposals and recommends that ISED permit parties to negotiate early transitions only on a voluntary basis.

Conclusion

34. Xplore thanks ISED for the opportunity to provide these Reply Comments.

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²² Rogers Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 29.

²³ Rogers Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at paras 43, 76.

²⁴ Rogers Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at para 31.

²⁵ Cogeco Communications Inc. Comments (SPB-002-26), 31 March 2026 at Q4c.