

# Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

## Canadian Combo: Rogers Looks to Convince Regulators to OK Shaw Deal

**Rogers** is pitching its \$16 billion deal to acquire **Shaw** as the means to make 5G Canada-wide a reality and as a way to close the digital gap for remote, rural and indigenous areas faster. The question is whether regulators will agree, especially given that the country's top wireless provider would be gobbling up a competitor in the space.

"At the end of the day, I assume they think they can get the deal through given their cable footprints do not overlap, and Shaw is in a weak 4th place in wireless," **Pivotal Research** analyst *Jeff Wlodarczak* told **CFX**. "While one could argue the US only had three wireless players, a big part of the reason for regulatory approval of **T-Mobile-Sprint** was the idea that **DISH** could eventually be a credible fourth player. They may have to do something similar—although it may be more difficult given DISH was uniquely positioned with spectrum."

Canada possibly agreeing to the elimination of a wireless competitor won't be a quick process. The companies expect the deal to close in the first half of 2022, with Rogers on the hook for paying Shaw a \$1.2 billion break-up fee under certain circumstances if it doesn't come together. "It's important to bear in mind that 80% of Shaw's revenues and 97% of its free cash flow are earned from the wireline business, which does not compete directly with Rogers," said Rogers CFO *Tony Staffieri* in an analyst call Monday. "We're going to work collaboratively with the regulators... We've had some good

conversations with some of the key people already."

Rogers sees synergies in the realm of about \$1 billion, with most of that coming from cost synergies. In terms of cap ex savings, Rogers says the opportunity for duplication is large but it will be relatively mild compared to op ex synergies. When you look at the \$1 billion in synergies, over 90% of Shaw's free cash flow comes from the cable side of the business, execs said.

"My family and I agree: the best way for us to serve our customers, to deliver them the next generation of network technology and services is to be a part of a strong national network," said Shaw CEO *Brad Shaw*, who will join Rogers' board as one of two seats Shaw will get if the deal closes. "The combination of Rogers and Shaw builds on the strong legacy of two families who founded Canadian companies and will create Canada's most robust, wholly owned national network."

The deal comes after another prominent Canadian family rebuffed **Altice USA's** acquisition attempts. Last fall, Altice offered \$8.4 billion for Cogeco in order to get its hands on US-based **Atlantic Broadband**. It was going to sell the Canadian assets to Rogers. But the Audet family that controls Cogeco made it clear that it wasn't selling. Altice has since moved on to snatching up smaller operators that overlap its footprint, most recently agreeing to acquire NC's **Morris Broadband** in a deal valued at \$310 million.

While the Shaw acquisition really centers on the wireless business and 5G, both Canadian operators have a cable video

## THE FAXIES

RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN PR & MARKETING

Submit your entries by **March 19**

Your hard work is done – and now it's time for you and your team to get recognized!

Honoring those people, shows, and networks who excel in digital content, marketing, advertising, social media and online content.

Categories include Audience Engagement & Experience, PR & Marketing, Executives and Teams of the Year.

[www.TheFAXIES.com](http://www.TheFAXIES.com)



business and both license Comcast's X1 platform. "We've been sitting across the table from each other in Comcast meetings and discussions around the nature of the technology and roadmap, so we're well versed, both organizations. And the synergies there both in terms of the video platform, but also the design and construction of the network and the way the network has been thought through, is very complementary," said Rogers president/CEO Joe Natale. "The history of cable has been about cable companies coming together and the synergies are born out of the fact the technology and platforms are similar."

CARR'S SPECTRUM CALENDAR

FCC commish Brendan Carr unveiled his spectrum priorities for the next two years and beyond, touting his plan as a way to secure US leadership in 5G. Speaking at the American Enterprise Institute Monday, he said the Commission needs to auction 100MHz in the 3.45GHz band at 5G power levels and more than 100MHz of spectrum in the 2.5GHz band this year. The Republican also hopes to adopt an order that would permit very low power devices to operate in the 6GHz band and to seek comment on increasing the power levels for CBRS operations in the 3.5GHz band. He also encouraged the agency to look at the U-NII-2C band, a 255MHz swath of unlicensed spectrum that is largely underutilized today. "This is because we have costly and cumbersome technical restraints on the band that are designed to protect federal operations. We should examine whether advances in technology would allow us to continue to protect federal incumbents through a more efficient mechanism, thus creating more opportunities for unlicensed use of this band," Carr said. After 2022, there will be additional spectrum

that the Commission will be able to move on including the lower 3GHz band, 4.8GHz, 7.125-8.4GHz and the spectrum above 95GHz. "So the good news is that we have plenty in the spectrum pipeline. It's on us at the FCC to make sure we stick to this schedule and get it into the market," Carr said. On the infrastructure side, he pushed for the FCC to create more accurate broadband maps by this fall. The maps he proposed would focus narrowly on the data needed to move forward with RDOF Phase II along with the 5G Fund, which will make \$9 billion in federal subsidies available over the next 10 years to bring 5G voice and broadband services to unserved rural areas.

COMCAST NIXING CONNECT APP

Comcast is discontinuing its Xfinity Connect app and Voice2Go feature as of April 20 and directing customers who want to read their Comcast email on a mobile device to use the Connect web portal at connect.xfinity.com or a third-party service, such as Outlook or Thunderbird. It's part of the company's efforts to simplify the customer experience and streamline the number of apps needed to manage Xfinity services. Comcast said the Xfinity Connect web portal is mobile optimized and will allow customers to manage voicemail just as they do today from the app. Voice2Go is a call forwarding feature that lets customers receive phone calls on their mobile phone from their Xfinity home number. Comcast is instead directing subscribers to the advanced call forwarding feature with Xfinity voice, which allows someone to select up to four additional phone numbers to ring when a call comes to the home phone.

KOMU 8 BLACKED OUT ON DISH

DISH has another carriage dispute on its hands. It lost KOMU 8, a NBC/CW affiliate in Columbia, MO, owned by the Univer-

Corporate Licenses

Cablefax Daily

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST.

Get reduced subscription rates for multiple readers in your organization.

Find out more! Contact Client Services at ClientServices@accessintel.com

www.cablefax.com



Cablefax Daily (ISSN 1069-6644) is published daily by Access Intelligence, LLC | www.cablefax.com | 301.354.2101 | Editorial Director: Amy Maclean, 301.354.1760, amaclean@accessintel.com | Publisher, Cablefax and Synopsis: Robbie Caploe, 917.974.0640, rcaploe@accessintel.com | Managing Editor: Sara Winegardner, 301.354.1701, swinegardner@accessintel.com | Assoc Editor: Theresa Maher, 301.354.1704, tmaher@accessintel.com | Executive Director, Strategic Partnerships: Albert Nassour, 917.545.3129, anassour@accessintel.com | Dir of Marketing: Kate Schaeffer, kschaeffer@accessintel.com | Production Manager: Joann Fato, jfato@accessintel.com | Kerry Smith, Divisional President, Marketing & Media Group, ksmith@accessintel.com | Group Subs/Subscription Questions, Client Services: 301.354.2101, clientservices@accessintel.com | Annual subscription price: \$1,799.00/year | Access Intelligence, LLC, 9211 Corporate Blvd., 4th Floor, Rockville, MD 20850

sity of Missouri on Friday. The deal was originally set to expire in March 2020, but the pair agreed to a temporary extension. “KOMU 8, a locally-owned, small-market TV station only requests that DISH Network, a multi-billion dollar corporation... agrees to a fair agreement in line with what we agreed to with other providers. At no time have we demanded exorbitant fees,” the station said in a statement. DISH said it’s open to working with KOMU, but “unfortunately, they are continuing to demand a rate increase that is simply unacceptable.”

#### NAMIC ANNOUNCES VISION AWARDS NOMINEES

**WarnerMedia** dominated **NAMIC**'s Vision Award nominations, scoring 20 nominations across standalone **HBO** and **HBO Max**. Garnering 5 noms each were **CNN**, **Nickelodeon** and **ESPN**. **Disney Junior**, **Lifetime**, **Cleo TV** and **NBC News Digital** are all tied up with three noms each. Others included in the nomination pool are **Pop TV**, **A&E**, **Discovery**, **AMC+**, **TBS**, **EPIX**, **TV One** and **BET**. Winners will be announced in April.

#### DISH, AMERICAN TOWER STRIKE LEASING DEAL

**DISH** and **American Tower** entered into a master lease agreement that allows the former to lease space on up to 20,000 American Tower communications sites. Cash lease payments from DISH to American Tower will commence in 2022 and grow over time as DISH's network deployment progresses. DISH may also lease shared generators from American Tower on select sites and will be allowed to utilize American Tower's zoning, permitting and other pre-construction services.

#### COMCAST STICKING BY OLYMPICS

**Comcast** extended its partnership with Team USA as part of the Olympic and Paralympic Games through 2028. The communications company also unveiled a founding partnership with the LA28 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Under the new agreement, Comcast will continue as the official communications services provider to consumers and businesses for Team USA for Beijing 2022, Paris 2024, Milan Cortina 2026 and Los Angeles 2028. Comcast has been an official partner of Team USA since 2017. **NBC**'s US broadcasting rights for the Olympic Games have been extended through 2032.

#### AT THE COMMISSION

The **FCC**'s Media Bureau established a pleading cycle for **Gray Television**'s proposed acquisition of **Quincy Media**. Petitions to deny are due April 12 and oppositions on April 27. The reply date is set at May 7. – The Wireline Competition Bureau is seeking comment on **Cable One**'s proposed buy of **Hargray**. Comments are due March 26 and replies April 2.

#### DISTRIBUTION

**Verizon Fios** added **Kanal D Drama** in HD to its Mundo and Mundo Total Hispanic packages, making it the second US operator to offer the channel. **Comcast** launched it in 2019. The network, part of **Canal+**'s Thema America, offers Turkish dramas in Spanish.

#### DEALS

Through April 25, new **Philo** subs who purchase a qualifying device at **Best Buy** can get their first month of service for \$1. Select

qualifying devices include streaming sticks like **Roku** or **Amazon Fire** as well as various smart TVs. The SVOD's normal price is \$20/month for 64 channels, including **AMC**, **Discovery** and **MTV**.

#### DISH AND DRAFTKING BRACKET CHALLENGE

**DISH** is giving its customers the chance to win \$1 million if they create a perfect NCAA tournament bracket. The DISH Bracket Challenge, sponsored by **DraftKings**, is taking entries and bracket edits through March 19 at 12pm ET. The challenge is available to DISH TV customers on the Bracket Challenge app, dishanywhere.com and any internet-connected Hopper family receiver. DISH and DraftKings announced a pact earlier this month where Hopper set-tops can access the sports wagering firm's app. DISH can bring DraftKing features to Sling and Boost Mobile in the future.

#### RATINGS

The second season finale of **TLC**'s “1,000-LB Sisters” on March 8 averaged 1.5 million P2+ viewers and a 1.28 rating with W25-54. Fans of the sophomore season also took to social, averaging 15 million interactions each week. – **HGTV** competition series “Rock the Block” delivered a .67 L+3 rating among P25-54 with the premiere of its second season on March 8. That reflects a 31% increase over the Season 1 premiere and a 52% lift over the previous six weeks. Renovation show “100 Day Dream Home” also grew over its freshman outing, averaging a 0.54 L+3 rating among P25-54 during its second season. That's a 37% increase over the last six weeks and a 21% rise over the first season's average.

#### MARKETING

**Tubi** partnered with **Chip Ganassi Racing** for its first branded integration with **NASCAR**. The streamer will appear as the primary partner on the car, in-car cameras and driver firesuits for **Ross Chastain** on March 21 at Atlanta Motor Speedway and **Kurt Busch** on April 17 at Richmond Raceway. **Fox Sports** reporter/Tubi ambassador **Erin Andrews** will serve as Grand Marshal on behalf of Tubi in Atlanta.

#### PROGRAMMING

**Drew Brees** will join **NBC Sports** as a studio analyst for “Football Night in America” and as a game analyst for its Notre Dame Football coverage. Brees, longtime quarterback for the New Orleans Saints, will also join the net for events such as the Olympics and Super Bowl LVI. – **HGTV**'s “\$50K Three Ways” premieres April 26 at 8pm and will be available to stream on **discovery+**. – **Food Network** is bringing **Martha Stewart** in to add a twist to a fan favorite. Five-part tournament series “Chopped: Martha Rules” premieres April 13 at 9pm. – **OWN** is developing its first animated comedy series, “The Mound.”

#### PEOPLE

**Sergio Verdu** was named vp, production of **Fox Deportes**. Verdu most recently served as director, production development and new projects at **ESPN**. – **Crown Media Family Networks** tapped **Maureen Barrett** as director of talent relations & events, a new position and area of oversight at the company.