






PROGRAM CONTEXT

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations Specialized Agency for telecommunications and information and communication technologies, acting as the global focal point for governments and the private sector in developing networks, services and related standards. ISED is responsible for leading Canada’s ITU representation and providing the annual financial contribution to the ITU. Telecommunications, a \$53.1 billion sector in 2018, underpins the productivity and growth of almost every sector of the Canadian economy. Among Canada’s key objectives in contributing to the ITU is protecting existing Canadian radiocommunications services from harmful interference.

In 2018-19, the total cost of ISED’s participation in the ITU was \$8.2 million, which included the annual financial contribution to the ITU, travel expenses and salary costs.

EVALUATION APPROACH

This evaluation examined the continued relevance, performance and efficiency of ISED’s involvement in the ITU in accordance with the Treasury Board Secretariat *Policy on Results*. It focused on the period from April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2019, utilizing several lines of evidence:

 <p>Document review</p>	 <p>Financial data analysis</p>
 <p>Key informant interviews</p>	 <p>Literature review</p>
 <p>Short survey</p>	

WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

ISED’s engagement, as part of the Canadian delegation, is required at ITU meetings and conferences to help steer the policy debate in order to advance Canadian priorities and protect Canadian positions from unacceptable proposals put forth by other Member States. ISED is best placed to represent the Government of Canada due to its high level of technical expertise and ongoing engagement with Canadian industry. ISED’s annual contribution to the ITU has declined significantly in recent years. Stakeholders suggest there would be repercussions for Canada and Canadian industry if ISED further reduced its contributory units to the ITU or eliminated its participation in the ITU, including: a loss of influence; possible detrimental effects for the Canadian telecommunications industry; and a lowered reputation at ITU meetings and conferences.

In terms of performance, ISED has been consistently successful in meeting target goals in advancing Canada’s positions and priorities at the ITU during the evaluation period. Based on stakeholder perceptions, ISED’s involvement in the ITU has contributed to: helping Canadian companies exploit and develop new services and technologies; enabling global connectivity and interoperability of telecommunications networks and services; and ensuring the ITU mandate is not expanded to internet governance matters outside its purview. It has also helped Canadians benefit from innovative products, services and information technology and telecommunications infrastructure, and enabled Canadian government and industry to offer radio and satellite services to users.

Although the size of the Canadian delegation to support international activities is slightly below average among the top contributing Member States, they are highly regarded by the international community in terms of their capabilities. It was noted by Canadian Sector Members that ISED should emphasize succession planning via increased training and development opportunities. Further, there are opportunities for ISED to enhance the effectiveness of domestic stakeholder engagement in the radiocommunications sector and the telecommunication standardization sector via increased flexibility (e.g., accepting written Canadian Preparatory Committee submissions versus having to be present at a meeting), outreach (e.g., engaging more small and medium-sized enterprises), and timelier information sharing and delegation planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintaining Effective ISED Representation:** ISED should maintain effective representation at the ITU, including increased emphasis on succession planning via increased training and development opportunities, enabling ISED officials to maintain influential roles at the ITU.
- Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement:** ISED should strengthen ongoing domestic engagement, including prior to ITU meetings, by allowing greater flexibility in the conference planning process, increasing outreach among potential stakeholders, and enabling timelier information sharing and delegation planning.