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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Human testing for new COVID-19 treatment developed by Pitt researchers planned for 2021

Telecom Ramblings
FirstLight Fiber to Buy KINBER's PennREN

Fierce Video
Comcast confirms interest in putting X1 on smart TVs

Hollywood Reporter
Peacock Reaches Over 15 Million Sign-Ups, Comcast CEO Says

Washington Post
Google faces Congress again, this time with Republicans taking lead

Altoona Mirror
Wolf seeks to relax election rules

Cogeco chief financial officer Patrice Ouimet said the motivation for Rogers Communications' hostile bid for his company may be primarily driven by the larger telecom firm's desire to keep Cogeco out of the wireless business.

Rogers, along with Altice USA, launched an unsolicited \$7.8 billion bid for Cogeco on Sept. 2. The deal was split into two parts -- Rogers would pay \$4.2 billion for Cogeco's Canadian telecom assets while Altice USA would put up \$3.6 billion for Cogeco's U.S. cable business, Atlantic Broadband. Cogeco's controlling shareholder -- the Audet family -- rejected the deal, saying in a statement last week that its rejection was not a negotiating tactic, but was indeed final.

At the BMO Capital Markets Media & Communications conference Tuesday, Ouimet said the company was not surprised by the Rogers and Altice USA bids, but was taken aback by how they did it. "The interest in our company is not that surprising," Ouimet said. "We have attractive assets in both countries and we have had strong performance as well -- we've performed very well in the past two or three years. Proceeding with a hostile offer on a family-owned company was something that was surprising to us. Not the interest, but the way it was done, especially since the Audet family had indicated the night before that they would not sell in the transaction."

Ouimet also was puzzled concerning the timing of the bid, speculating that it may be tied to Cogeco's plans to launch a wireless service. Cogeco submitted a plan to offer a Hybrid Mobile Network Operator (HMNO) wireless service, using its own spectrum and leasing network space from other carriers, to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in February. That proposal is still awaiting approval from the regulatory agency. "Taking Cogeco out of the equation for Rogers is probably part of the equation to launch a hostile bid right now," Ouimet said.

Later at the same conference on Tuesday, Rogers CEO Joe Natale said the impetus behind the bid is whether Cogeco, which mainly operates in Quebec, will be a part of Rogers' plans for the rest of the country. Rogers is the largest telecom operator in Canada. "As we sit here with our board and make our

Spotlight PA
Top Pa.
Republican's
campaign sues
journalists over
public records costs

Philadelphia Inquirer
Trump town hall in
Philadelphia
prompts protests
near National
Constitution Center,
march through
Center City

capital plans for the medium and the long term, we're asking a very fundamental question -- Do our plans include Cogeco territory or not?" Natale said. "It's a question that we've asked over the years."

Natale added that Rogers has been the largest individual shareholder in Cogeco for years, and though it has a 33% economic stake, the Audet family controls nearly 70% of the vote. "The question as we enshrine our capital plans and look at driving innovations, is that with Cogeco inside as part of a partnership here or is it not?" Natale said. "I'd hate to miss this technology innovation cycle and not have answered the question."

Altice USA CEO Dexter Goei said he has received "very supportive" feedback from Cogeco shareholders since his company paired with Rogers Communications to launch an unsolicited bid for the Canadian telecom company. And though he said he is still pursuing a deal despite a rejection from Cogeco's controlling shareholder, he stopped short of saying he would increase his offer.

Altice and Rogers launched their \$7.8 billion bid for Cogeco on Sept. 2 and almost immediately was rebuffed by Cogeco's ruling Audet family, which said it had no intention to sell. While some have speculated that Altice will likely raise its offer to keep the deal alive, the Audet's have insisted their rejection was not a negotiating tactic. At the Goldman Sachs Communacopia conference on Tuesday, Goei wouldn't say whether Altice USA plans to increase its bid. But he said he has received a lot of positive feedback from shareholders outside of the Audet family. "We remain committed to the process and we look forward to hearing back at some point from the board," Goei said at the conference. "We've gotten, as you may suspect, very supportive feedback from shareholders of the target who would like to see us engaged in a process. I think there's just a question of time in terms of if we are able to engage here and what form it would take."

Altice USA still sees M&A as the most effective path to growth, adding that the company has had success in squeezing more revenue and profit out of small assets. "We've never shied away [from the idea] that M&A is the best return for our shareholders," Goei said, adding that while Atlantic Broadband is well run, he believes Altice USA can make it even more profitable. "We think we can do a better job going forward, not only on the cost side of the business," Goei continued. "Each of the businesses we've acquired -- at Cablevision and at Suddenlink -- we've been able to accelerate top line growth, whether it's in the existing footprint in cable, but also the ancillary businesses whether it be B2B, advertising or mobile. We feel good about our opportunities about taking smaller businesses in cable and driving great integration and top line growth." – **Next TV**

Comcast, coming off one of its best quarters ever in terms of broadband subscriber additions in Q2, is on track to beat that milestone in Q3, adding more than 500,000 high-speed internet customers in the period, chairman and CEO Brian Roberts said at an industry conference Tuesday.

At the virtual Goldman Sachs Communacopia conference on Sept. 14, Roberts said that Comcast's previous best broadband quarter ever was in Q1 2008, when it added about 492,000 broadband subscribers. "We're going to beat that," Roberts said. "We're already looking at well over 500,000 [additions]. The quarter hasn't closed and I'm not sure where we will land, but I feel really great about that success" The third quarter officially ends on Sept. 30.

Roberts added that combined, broadband performance in Q2 and Q3 combined will be "better than anything we've seen in 10 years." That broadband growth also is translated into better financial metrics. Roberts said Comcast Cable EBITDA growth -- at 5.5% in Q1 and 6% in Q2 -- should be "substantially" above that in Q3, adding that its NBCUniversal content business

is "starting to come back." Consolidated EBITDA growth will be lower, mainly because its Theme Parks were hit hard by the pandemic.

On the video side, Roberts noted that its Peacock streaming service, launched nationally in July, has reached 15 million sign-ups, a 50% increase from July when it had about [10 million customers](#). Roberts noted that NBCU has undergone some management shakeups, adding that the changes are being made to reflect how the business has changed.

"We would like to get to a place where we're indifferent, and I think we're almost, frankly we're there," Roberts said of Comcast's attitude toward whether customers opt for traditional video or streaming options. "In video, some customers want it all, and other customers just want to be streaming," Roberts said, adding that it just crossed the 2-million customer milestone for its broadband-only Flex service.

He added that video continues to be an important part of the overall strategy. For example it has layered Peacock and its 10,000 hours of free content on the flex service, which has increased the value of both services to consumers. "We wanted to come up with something more than just an internet connection," Roberts said concerning the development of Flex. "...I think we're onto something pretty special there." — **Next TV**

Pennsylvania has already suffered one interminable mail-vote delay in 2020, and a repeat in November could draw the entire country into a legal brawl, while putting the result of the presidential election into serious doubt. How about heading off this too-predictable debacle before it happens?

A week after the June 2 primary, about [half the counties](#) in the Keystone State were still tallying ballots. On June 11, Philadelphia alone had 42,255 votes uncounted. President Trump won Pennsylvania in 2016 by 44,292. If Mr. Trump and Joe Biden run neck and neck in November, how long might Pennsylvania keep the Electoral College hanging? In the campaign's closing weeks, arriving mail votes will pile up in local offices, but state law says they can't be processed until 7 a.m. on Election Day. This wasn't enough preparation to give timely results when 1.5 million residents voted absentee in June, and it won't be in November.

Tight deadlines are another problem. Pennsylvanians can request a mail ballot as late as 5 p.m. on Oct. 27. For votes to count, they must arrive at local election offices by 8 p.m. on Nov. 3. That leaves seven days, including a Sunday, for applications to be handled, blank ballots delivered, and votes dropped off or return mailed. The U.S. Postal Service says such a turnaround is unrealistic and creates a high risk of tardiness. America's first postmaster general, Ben Franklin, would be unhappy to see his Pennsylvania setting up the USPS for failure.

In some states, straggling ballots are valid if they're postmarked by Election Day. Pennsylvania law has no similar provision, but Democrats [are asking the state Supreme Court](#) to conjure one. Gov. Tom Wolf, a Democrat, wants to count votes arriving by Nov. 6. Pennsylvania also lacks a way for voters to fix ballots that are rejected for suspect signatures. This is a recipe for [extended legal mischief](#) and for judges to determine which votes are counted. With the state Supreme Court controlled by Democrats, that could be what Mr. Wolf has in mind.

The state Legislature, run by Republicans, is moving a bill with fixes. Under the House proposal, which passed 112-90 last week, the deadline to request mail ballots would jump to a comfortable 15 days before the election, as the USPS suggests. Absentee votes could be pre-processed beginning the Saturday before Nov. 3. Voters with suspect signatures would be given a chance to prove their identities. Mr. Wolf plans to veto the bill "for a multitude of reasons," his spokeswoman says. One objection is that it "seeks to eliminate the use of

drop boxes." True enough, although it would also authorize Pennsylvanians to drop off voted mail ballots at their polling places. Mr. Wolf wants a longer period of pre-processing for mail votes: three weeks, not three days.

The tragedy would be for Republicans to pass a bill, Mr. Wolf to veto it, and Pennsylvania to barrel toward a foreseeable crash. Maybe three days of pre-processing is too little, given the busyness of Nov. 1 and 2. Maybe three weeks is too much. Mr. Wolf's office didn't reply Thursday to a query on the potential for compromise. "We continue to be open to negotiations," says a spokeswoman for Senate Majority Leader Jake Corman, "and hope that the Governor would meet with Republican legislative leaders."

The same should be happening beyond Harrisburg. About [a dozen states](#), including Wisconsin and Michigan, don't process ballots until Election Day. Minnesotans can request a mail ballot on Nov. 2. Smells like more lawsuits. Some analysts in Washington are so alarmed about delayed presidential results that they're calling to delay the date of the Electoral College vote, which can be changed with an act of Congress. Inauguration Day is fixed in the Constitution as Jan. 20.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio has [a bill](#) to bump the meeting of electors from Dec. 14 to Jan. 2. So Americans can spend Christmas wondering who their next President will be? There's still time to avoid that outcome. States shouldn't be let off the hook. If Mr. Wolf and Pennsylvania's legislators get together now to fix their shortsighted and potentially destructive election laws, and if other states follow, then with any luck Mr. Rubio's bill will never be needed. But on present trend, in a close presidential race, we are headed toward a vote-counting mess in which both sides claim victory. Don't rule out furious supporters of the candidates battling in the street. If you think this isn't possible in America, you haven't been paying attention to this year's "summer of love." – *Wall Street Journal editorial*

