



Telecom Decision CRTC 2009-255

Ottawa, 7 May 2009

Code relief for Quebec area code 450

File number: 8698-C12-200814849

In this decision, the Commission makes its determinations on a code relief solution for area code 450. In this regard, the Commission directs that

- *relief for area code 450 be provided through a boundary extension overlay using existing area code 438 on the area served by area code 450 starting on 23 October 2010; and*
- *the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee ad hoc relief planning committee for area code 450 update the relief implementation plan to include the Commission's determinations in this decision and re-file it for Commission approval.*

Background

1. On 28 August 2008, the Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA) informed the Commission that the results of a general numbering resource utilization forecast indicated that area code 450 in the area of Quebec surrounding Montreal Island would exhaust by September 2012.
2. The Commission subsequently issued *Establishment of a CISC ad hoc committee for area code relief planning in Quebec area code 450*, Telecom Public Notice CRTC 2008-17, 4 November 2008, in which the Commission established the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee ad hoc numbering plan area (NPA) 450 relief planning committee (RPC) for the purpose of making recommendations regarding the various code relief options available for area code 450.
3. In that public notice, the Commission also directed the RPC to set aside 7 central office codes (CO codes) for initial code assignments and 10 central office codes for initial code assignments to new entrants only.
4. Subsequent numbering resource utilization forecasts have projected an advancement of the projected exhaust date to December 2010. In accordance with the criteria set out in the NPA Relief Planning Guidelines (the Guidelines) this exhaust advancement has resulted in a jeopardy condition¹ being declared for area code 450.

¹ According to the Guidelines, a jeopardy condition is declared when the forecast and/or actual demand for CO codes exceeds the available supply of CO codes before relief is implemented or the implementation time frame is shorter than 36 months and no relief plan is yet in place.

The RPC's submission

5. The RPC filed with the Commission a planning document dated 11 February 2009, in which the RPC evaluated 14 relief options including variations on geographic splits, an area code 438 boundary extension overlay, and a distributed overlay of a new area code on area code 450. The RPC also filed with the Commission a relief implementation plan (RIP) dated 20 March 2009. In the RIP, the RPC included the detailed implementation measures and plans to provide relief in accordance with its recommendations in the planning document. The RIP also includes a network implementation plan and a consumer awareness campaign plan.
6. In the planning document, the RPC recommended that
 - a) the relief method be a distributed overlay;
 - b) 17 CO codes corresponding to future Canadian area codes that are currently designated as unavailable for assignment in area code 450 be made available for assignment at the time of Commission approval of the relief method;
 - c) 7 CO codes set aside for initial code assignment be made available for assignment prior to relief being implemented; and
 - d) the projected exhaust date be changed to February 2011 and the relief implementation date be set as 23 October 2010.
7. While recommending that the relief method be a distributed overlay, the RPC noted that it had not reached a consensus concerning how the overlay should be implemented.
8. The Commission considers that the RPC's planning document raises the following issues:
 - I. The relief method
 - II. The treatment of CO codes in area code 450
 - III. The projected exhaust date and timing of code relief implementation
 - IV. Reservation of area code 579
 - V. Relief implementation plan
 - VI. The appropriate consumer awareness methods

I. The relief method

9. The Commission notes that the RPC participants agreed that the best approach was a distributed overlay, but they could not agree on how this should be accomplished. The Commission notes that Bell Canada preferred a boundary extension overlay using existing area code 438 while other parties preferred an overlay using a new area code 579.

10. The Commission notes that the projected exhaust date for area code 450 is presently forecasted as November 2010 and that under normal planning timelines, in accordance with the guidelines, relief should be in place 12 to 18 months prior to the projected exhaust date. The Commission considers that with the compressed time frame to area code exhaust, in this instance, the speed in which area code relief can be implemented is a key consideration.
11. The Commission considers that using existing area code 438 in a boundary extension overlay of the geographic area presently served by area code 450 would be faster to implement than using a new area code, given that area code 438 is already recognized by carriers operating in the rest of the North American Numbering Plan. The Commission recognizes that using a new area code would provide a longer time frame of 40 years before relief would be required again in that region. However, the Commission considers that the expected life of 18 years for this relief method is reasonable and in accordance with the Guidelines. The Commission further considers that using existing area code 438 is an efficient use of numbering resources as it will reduce the number of separate relief planning areas to three compared to four if a distributed overlay with a new area code was used.
12. The Commission therefore determines that code relief for area code 450 is to be provided by a boundary extension overlay using existing area code 438.

II. The treatment of CO codes in area code 450

CO codes for initial code assignments

13. The Commission notes the RPC's recommendation that the seven CO codes from area code 450 set aside in Telecom Public Notice 2008-17 for initial code assignment to applicants in general be made available for assignment prior to relief being implemented. The Commission agrees that given the jeopardy condition in area code 450, the seven CO codes should be made available for assignment.
14. The Commission reiterates that the 10 CO codes set aside for initial code assignments to new entrants should only be used for new entrants.
15. The Commission therefore determines that the CNA is to make the seven CO codes available for assignment in area code 450 starting from the date of this decision.

CO codes which correspond to future area codes

16. The Commission notes the RPC's recommendation that CO codes 249, 257, 273, 354, 365, 367, 382, 387, 428, 487, 639, 683, 851, 871, 873, 879, and 942 (the 17 CO codes), which correspond to future Canadian area codes, be made available for assignment in area code 450 starting from the date of a Commission decision.

17. The Commission notes that area code 450 is currently in a jeopardy condition and as such the 17 CO codes could be made available for assignment if needed. The Commission therefore determines that in a jeopardy situation the 17 CO codes may be assigned, but only if this assignment is required to meet CO code demand prior to 66 days before the relief implementation date.
18. The Commission further determines that any remaining CO codes from this pool shall become unassignable after the relief implementation date.

III. The projected exhaust date and timing of code relief implementation

19. The Commission notes that the RPC recommended that the projected exhaust date for area code 450 be revised from November 2010 to February 2011 based on the assumption that the 17 CO codes were available for assignment.
20. The Commission notes that with this decision, the assignment pool has potentially been increased by the 17 CO codes and that this increase in the pool of available CO codes will extend the projected exhaust date. The Commission therefore determines that for planning purposes the projected exhaust date is to be February 2011.
21. The Commission notes that 10-digit local dialing is already in place in area code 450. As a result, the Commission considers that there is no need for a permissive dialing period in the relief implementation. The Commission therefore considers that the time frame for implementation can be considerably shorter.
22. The Commission notes that while the time before the projected exhaust date is very limited, carriers and customers need time to ready their networks and systems for the new area code overlay. The Commission therefore considers that the introduction of the new area code overlay should be delayed as long as possible without incurring the risk of running out of assignable CO codes.
23. Accordingly, the Commission determines that the relief implementation date for a boundary extension overlay using existing area code 438 is to be 23 October 2010.

IV. Reservation of area code 579

24. The Commission considers that wherever possible, it is good assignment practice to use an area code that has not been used as a CO code within the area to be served or in areas adjacent to it, as this reduces potential customer dialing confusion. The Commission notes that CO code 579 is the only CO code corresponding to a future area code that is not assigned in area codes 438, 450, and 514. The Commission therefore determines that the CNA is to reserve area code 579 for subsequent relief of area codes 438, 450, and 514, and it is not to be assigned as a CO code in those area codes.

V. Relief implementation plan

25. The Commission notes that the RIP filed by the RPC included recommendations and milestone dates developed by the RPC in accordance with its recommendations in the planning document. The Commission further notes that some of these recommendations and milestones have been altered by the Commission's determinations in this decision. The Commission therefore requests that the RPC update the RIP to include those determinations and re-file the updated RIP with the Commission for its approval.

VI. The appropriate consumer awareness programs

26. The Commission considers that, although there is no need to educate consumers on mandatory 10-digit local dialing, there is still a need to make consumers and users aware of the introduction of area code 438 in the 450 area and that the prefix 1 is not required for local 10-digit dialing to, from, or within the new overlay area code or the current 450 area code. The Commission therefore determines that telecommunications service providers in area code 450 are to implement a consumer awareness program on a timely basis. This consumer awareness program is to highlight the introduction of overlay area code 438 and the fact that there will be no changes in local dialing patterns.

Conclusion

27. The Commission determines that relief for area code 450 is to be a distributed overlay by a boundary extension of area code 438 on the area served by area code 450 starting on 23 October 2010. The Commission also requests that the RPC revise its RIP to incorporate the determinations in this decision and re-file it for Commission approval.

Secretary General

This document is available in alternative format upon request, and may also be examined in PDF format or in HTML at the following Internet site: <http://www.crtc.gc.ca>