



## Telecom Decision CRTC 2020-363

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Ottawa, 28 October 2020

*Public record: 1011-NOC2016-0206*

### Further revision to the relief implementation schedule for area code 506 in New Brunswick

#### Background

1. In Telecom Decision [2018-332](#), dated 30 August 2018, the Commission determined that relief for area code 506 in New Brunswick was to be provided by implementing the distributed overlay area code 428, effective 21 November 2020 (the relief date).<sup>1</sup>
2. In that decision, the Commission also approved a consensus report of the New Brunswick relief planning committee, including a planning document and a relief implementation plan that included provisions for the transition from 7- to 10-digit local dialing, required for the introduction of the overlay area code.<sup>2</sup>
3. In Telecom Decision 2020-135, dated 24 April 2020, the Commission changed the relief date to 23 April 2022. In that decision, the Commission also approved a consensus report of the New Brunswick relief planning committee that included a revised relief implementation schedule as part of a revised relief implementation plan.
4. In May 2020, the Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA) published the results of a relief number resource utilization forecast (relief NRUF)<sup>3</sup> that indicated that the projected exhaust date for area code 506 had moved outward to March 2024. Subsequently, the CNA advised the New Brunswick relief committee that, due to revised forecasts from some carriers, the projected exhaust date had moved inward to December 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> Telephone numbers in Canada are 10 digits long, in the format NPA-NXX-XXXX. The NPA, or national planning area, is also known as an area code and serves a defined geographic area as shown [here](#). NXX, often referred to as a central office (CO) code, designates a switch. XXXX designates the number of an individual subscriber within a switch. When no more CO codes are available within an area code, a new area code is added in the geographic area served by the original area code. The new area code is referred to as an overlay on the original area code. As it provides telephone numbers to the same geographical area as the original area code, it is called a distributed overlay area code.

<sup>2</sup> With overlay area codes, the same CO codes are used in the different area codes within the same geographical area. Ten-digit local dialing is required to differentiate between them.

<sup>3</sup> A relief NRUF is conducted every six months by the CNA for area codes that are within a relief planning window of 72 months.

5. In a submission to the New Brunswick relief planning committee dated 1 May 2020, Bell Canada proposed a deferral of relief implementation to 29 April 2023. The New Brunswick relief planning committee accepted that proposal.

## Report

6. On 27 July 2020 the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC)<sup>4</sup> approved and forwarded to the Commission for its approval the New Brunswick relief planning committee's [Task Information Form<sup>5</sup> \(TIF\) Report #3](#) (the report).
7. The New Brunswick relief committee noted that the relief date was 19 months in advance of the revised projected exhaust date and recommended the postponement of relief implementation to 29 April 2023.
8. The report included a revised relief implementation plan with revisions to the relief implementation schedule that reflect the proposed relief date. The relief implementation plan included, as attachments, a revised consumer awareness program, a revised network implementation plan, and a list of the responsibilities for individual telecommunications service providers (TSPs).
9. The revisions to the relief implementation schedule affect activities such as TSPs' communications with customers and operators of other telecommunications services;<sup>6</sup> timelines for the submission of progress reports; network testing; and the transition from 7- to 10-digit local dialing.
10. Dates associated with the transition to 10-digit local dialing have been revised as follows:
  - carriers must complete all network modifications necessary for 10-digit local dialing by 27 October 2022;
  - the transition to 10-digit local dialing will be phased in from 20 January 2023 to 27 January 2023, with a network announcement that intercepts calls dialed with 7 digits and informs callers of the requirement to dial 10 digits, and then completes the call;

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<sup>4</sup> CISC is an organization established by the CRTC to develop information, procedures, and guidelines as required for various aspects of telecommunications operations within the CRTC's jurisdiction. CISC consists of a number of working groups that work on activities such as network interconnection and operations, telecommunications inter-carrier business processes, 9-1-1 emergency call handling, and numbering administration.

<sup>5</sup> Within CISC, a TIF is a standardized form that describes an issue to be worked on by a CISC working group. All CISC activities are initiated by the completion and acceptance of a TIF. When an activity is completed, the working group prepares a TIF Report to document its activities, analysis, and recommendations for the issue initiated by the TIF.

<sup>6</sup> These telecommunications services users include 9-1-1 PSAPs, alarm companies, Internet service providers, paging companies, payphone providers, etc.

- mandatory 10-digit local dialing will be phased in from 15 April 2023 to 22 April 2023, with a network announcement that intercepts calls dialed with 7 digits and tells the caller to re-dial using 10 digits;
- the new area code will be implemented on 29 April 2023; and
- a network announcement that intercepts calls dialed with 7 digits and informs the caller that the call cannot be completed as dialed will be phased in from 29 July 2023 to 28 August 2023.

## **Commission's analysis and determinations**

11. The Commission notes that New Brunswick is one of the few places in Canada where 7-digit local dialing remains in place. The transition to local 10-digit dialing will necessitate changes to telecommunications switches and customer premise equipment, such as private branch exchanges, monitoring equipment, telephone number databases, etc. Businesses will need to change contact information to include 10-digit telephone numbers. A three to four month transition period is typically required to educate telecommunications users to dial local calls with 10 digits.
12. According to the [Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline](#) (the Guideline), the implementation date for a new area code should generally be 12 to 18 months prior to the projected exhaust date of the current area code.<sup>7</sup> This lead time provides a buffer in case the demand for central office (CO) codes is greater than expected in the period before the introduction of the new area code.
13. The Commission notes that the proposed relief date is approximately eight months in advance of the projected exhaust date of area code 506. However, the Commission considers that a shortened time frame between the projected exhaust date and relief implementation is acceptable in this case, for several reasons. The area code relief implementation process, including the transition from 7- to 10-digit local dialing, is well understood by those involved in its implementation; the date by which networks will be required to complete the modifications needed for 10-digit local dialing is well over 12 months in advance of the projected exhaust date; and the education of customers with network announcements regarding the transition to 10-digit local dialing will begin approximately 12 months before the projected exhaust date.
14. Further, the Commission considers that the introduction of a new area code earlier than necessary can result in the inefficient use of capital and other resources, since TSPs and customers may make expenditures that could otherwise be delayed with no adverse effects. This is particularly relevant in the circumstances of the current pandemic.
15. The Commission therefore considers that it would be reasonable to change the implementation date of the new overlay area code to 29 April 2023, since this date is

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<sup>7</sup> Section 8.21 of the Guideline

far enough in advance of the projected exhaust date of area code 506 to ensure an adequate supply of CO codes to carriers operating in New Brunswick.

16. In light of the above, the Commission **approves** the report, including the revised relief implementation plan and relief implementation schedule, which are based on an effective date of **29 April 2023** for the introduction of the new distributed overlay area code.

### **Policy Direction**

17. In accordance with subparagraph 1(b)(i) of the 2006 Policy Direction,<sup>8</sup> the Commission considers that this decision will advance the policy objective set out in paragraph 7(f) of the *Telecommunications Act*.<sup>9</sup>
18. In accordance with the 2019 Policy Direction,<sup>10</sup> the Commission considers that this decision will promote competition, affordability, and consumer interests by avoiding inefficient expenditures that could result from the introduction of a new area code and of 10-digit local dialing before they are required.

Secretary General

### **Related documents**

- *Revision to the relief implementation schedule for area code 506 in New Brunswick*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2020-135, 24 April 2020
- *Relief for area code 506 in New Brunswick*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2018-332, 30 August 2018

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<sup>8</sup> *Order issuing a Direction to the CRTC on Implementing the Canadian Telecommunications Policy Objectives* SOR/2006-355, 14 December 2006

<sup>9</sup> The cited policy objective is: 7(f) to foster increased reliance on market forces for the provision of telecommunications services and to ensure that regulation where required is efficient and effective.

<sup>10</sup> *Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on Implementing the Canadian Telecommunications Policy Objectives to Promote Competition, Affordability, Consumer Interests and Innovation*. SOR/2019-227, 17 June 2019