



Telecom Decision CRTC 2021-13

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Indefinite deferral of relief for area code 709 in Newfoundland and Labrador

*The Commission **approves** the 709 relief planning committee's Task Information Form Report #4. In addition, the Commission determines that relief planning for area code 709 in Newfoundland and Labrador is to be indefinitely deferred until the area code re-enters the relief planning window.*

Background

1. In Telecom Decision 2017-35, the Commission determined that relief for area code 709 in Newfoundland and Labrador was to be provided by the implementation of a new distributed overlay area code (879), effective 24 November 2018.
2. The Commission also approved the 709 relief planning committee's (the 709 RPC) proposed planning document and the relief implementation plan, which included the transition from seven-digit to ten-digit local dialing, beginning 17 August 2018.¹
3. In Telecom Decision 2018-59, the Commission found that the relief implementation date for area code 709 should be delayed and requested that the 709 RPC recommend an appropriate relief implementation date that would take into account the results of an upcoming semi-annual area code 709 relief numbering resource utilization forecast (R-NRUF).
4. In Telecom Decision 2018-333, further to the above request, the Commission approved a revised relief implementation plan with a revised implementation date of 20 May 2022.
5. On 26 June 2020, the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC) submitted the 709 RPC's Task Identification Form [TIF] Report #3 to the Commission for approval. In the report, the 709 RPC recommended that relief implementation be postponed until 27 May 2023. This recommendation was based on the January 2020 R-NRUF results, which indicated that the projected exhaust date had been postponed to February 2024. The Commission has not considered this TIF Report.

¹ Ten-digit local dialing is required to differentiate the central office (CO) codes between different overlay area codes, since the same CO codes may be assigned in each area code.

6. The Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA) released the July 2020 R-NRUF results on 18 August 2020, which indicated that the projected exhaust date had been delayed by 51 months, to June 2028. This delay moves area code 709 outside of the relief planning window.

TIF Report #4

7. Because area code 709 has moved outside of the relief planning window, the 709 RPC prepared TIF Report #4, in which it recommended that relief planning be indefinitely deferred.
8. The 709 RPC submitted that the current approved relief date of 20 May 2022 is six years ahead of the projected exhaust date, and the relief date of 27 May 2023 recommended by the 709 RPC in TIF Report #3 is five years ahead of the projected exhaust date. The 709 RPC noted that the revised projected exhaust date is significantly farther away from the previous forecasts, which calls into question the validity of these forecasts.
9. Since the current projected exhaust date is outside the relief planning window, the 709 RPC proposed that relief planning and R-NRUFs be suspended. The 709 RPC would reconvene and these activities would resume once area code 709 re-enters the relief planning window.
10. CISC submitted TIF Report #4 and requested that the Commission approve it.

Commission's analysis and determinations

11. The CNA reviews all NRUF results with CRTC staff prior to their release to the industry. When the July 2020 R-NRUF results were reviewed, Commission staff noted that adjustments in carriers' forecasts resulted in a change in the projected exhaust date. The Commission considers that the results of the July 2020 R-NRUF results are credible.
12. Pursuant to section 8.19 of 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(s). This lead time allows for a buffer for unexpected or unforecasted CO code demand to be met before the new area code is introduced.
13. The current relief date (five to six years before the projected exhaust date) is significantly ahead of the time frame set out in the Guideline. In fact, the latest projected exhaust date is outside of the relief planning window set out in the Guideline. Implementing area code relief so far in advance of when it is actually needed is an inefficient use of resources, since the associated expenditures would be made long before they are actually required. These resources could not then be used for more immediate projects. Further, to avoid consumer confusion, it is likely that two customer communications programs would be necessary if area code relief is not deferred. The first would be required when the new area code is implemented and the

second just before the first numbers from the new area codes are assigned to customers. This duplicate effort is also resource-inefficient.

14. The 709 RPC would be able to respond quickly if the projected exhaust date was to be brought forward, because the relief implementation plan has already been developed and approved. This plan includes the network implementation plan, the consumer awareness plan, and the required activities for the change from seven-digit to ten-digit local dialing. When relief planning resumes, the main 709 RPC activity will be updating the relief implementation schedule to incorporate the new timelines associated with the latest projected exhaust date. This schedule, along with other required documents, would be submitted to the Commission for approval.
15. The Commission therefore considers that it is reasonable to indefinitely defer area code 709 relief planning and implementation until area code 709 re-enters the relief planning window.
16. In light of the above, the Commission **approves** the 709 RPC's TIF Report #4 and determines that relief planning and implementation for area code 709 is to be indefinitely deferred until area code 709 re-enters the relief planning window.

Policy Directions

17. In accordance with subparagraph 1(b)(i) of the 2006 Policy Direction,² the Commission considers that approval of the report will advance the policy objective set out in paragraph 7(f) of the *Telecommunications Act*.³
18. In accordance with the 2019 Policy Direction,⁴ the Commission considers that this decision can promote competition, affordability, and consumer interests by avoiding inefficient expenditures, such as requiring funds to be spent long before they are actually required and running two consumer education programs – one when the new area code is implemented and the second just before the first numbers from the new area codes are assigned to customers.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Revised implementation date for area code 709 in Newfoundland and Labrador*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2018-333, 30 August 2018

² *Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on Implementing the Canadian Telecommunications Policy Objectives*, SOR/2006-355, 14 December 2006

³ 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.

⁴ *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

- *CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee – Dispute regarding deferral of the relief implementation date for area code 709 in Newfoundland and Labrador, Telecom Decision CRTC 2018-59, 14 February 2018*
- *Area code relief for area code 709 in Newfoundland and Labrador, Telecom Decision CRTC 2017-35, 2 February 2017*