



Telecom Decision CRTC 2021-364

PDF version

Ottawa, 1 November 2021

Public record: 8621-C12-01/08

Relief for area codes 438 and 514 in Montreal, Quebec

The Commission determines that relief for area codes 438 and 514 in Montreal, Quebec is to be provided by implementing a distributed overlay of new area code 263, effective **22 October 2022**. In addition, the Commission **approves** the 438/514 relief planning committee's report, including the proposed planning document and relief implementation plan.

Introduction

1. On 20 September 2019, the Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA)¹ advised the Commission that, based on the results of the most recent numbering resource utilization forecast (NRUF), area codes 438 and 514, which cover much of the region of Montreal, were projected to exhaust by November 2024.
2. In Telecom Notice of Consultation [2020-37](#), the Commission established a CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC)² ad hoc relief planning committee that was to examine options and make recommendations regarding the provision of additional numbering resources in the areas served by area codes 438 and 514 (the relief planning committee).
3. On 4 June 2021, the CNA published a revised version of the results of a relief NRUF³ conducted in January 2021 indicating that the projected exhaust date for area codes 438 and 514 had advanced to January 2022. This placed area codes 438 and 514 in a jeopardy condition.⁴

¹ In making assignment decisions, the CNA follows regulatory directives and industry-developed guidelines. As necessary, it participates in and contributes to the technical requirements associated with the planning, administration, allocation, assignment, and use of North American Numbering Plan numbering resources. The CNA is not a policy-making entity.

² CISC is an organization established by the Commission to assist in developing information, procedures, and guidelines as may be required in various aspects of the Commission's regulatory activities.

³ A relief NRUF is conducted every six months by the CNA for area codes that are within the relief planning window.

⁴ A jeopardy condition is declared when the available pool of assignable central office codes is forecasted to run out before a relief area code can be implemented.

4. However, a further revision, published on 9 June 2021, indicated that the projected exhaust date had moved out to 24 February 2024. The jeopardy condition was therefore suspended.
5. On 8 July 2021, the relief planning committee began a series of meetings to consider submissions from the CNA that helped them prepare a planning document and relief implementation plan.

Report

6. On 27 July 2021, CISC approved and forwarded to the Commission, for its approval, the relief planning committee's [438/514 Task Identification Form \(TIF\) Report #1](#) (the report).
7. The report included the planning document and a relief implementation plan that sets out a relief implementation schedule. The relief implementation plan also includes documents that detail a consumer awareness program, a network implementation plan, and the responsibilities of individual telecommunications service providers (TSPs). These documents are available on the CNA's [website](#).
8. In the planning document, the relief planning committee recommended that
 - the method of relief should be the introduction of a distributed overlay area code in the region served by area codes 438 and 514;
 - the new area code should be 263, as determined by the Commission in Telecom Decision [2017-38](#); and
 - the relief implementation date should be 22 October 2022.
9. With regards to the recommended relief implementation date, the relief planning committee noted that it allows for the coordination of relief implementation in the 438 and 514 numbering plan area with relief implementation activities that are currently underway in adjacent numbering plan areas.
10. The relief implementation plan includes the recommendations from the planning document, and sets out a public framework and time frame for the steps required to implement area code relief. It also includes activities, deliverables, and issues that affect more than one TSP. It does not address activities internal to individual TSPs.

Should the Commission approve the report?

Relief method

11. The [Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline](#) (the Guideline) states that a distributed overlay code is the only method that should be considered as a form of area code relief.⁵ An overlay area code does not necessitate changes to telephone

⁵ See Article 5.1 of the Guideline.

numbers, as was the case with some methods used in the past.⁶ Also, it creates fewer separate areas for which relief planning may need to be considered in the future.

12. The use of overlay area codes requires 10-digit local dialing because of the need to differentiate between the same central office codes in each of the area codes within the same geographical area. In the area served by area codes 438 and 514, 10-digit local dialing is already in place.
13. There is already a distributed overlay area code in the area originally served by area code 514. Thus, the addition of another distributed overlay area code is the logical method for the provision of further relief.
14. Accordingly, the Commission determines that the area served by area codes 438 and 514 is to be overlaid with an additional area code.

Relief area code

15. In Telecom Decision 2017-38, the Commission set aside area code 263 as a future relief area code for area codes 438 and 514.
16. The Commission therefore determines that area code 263 is to be used for the relief of area codes 438 and 514.

Implementation date

17. The relief planning committee recommended a relief implementation date of 22 October 2022, 14 months in advance of the projected exhaust date. The Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline (the Guideline) currently recommends a lead time of six months. However, given that the Guideline previously recommended a lead time of 12 to 18 months, the Commission considers that a lead time of 14 months is within acceptable limits.
18. With regards to the benefits of implementing relief simultaneously for area codes 438 and 514 and for area codes in adjacent numbering plan areas, the Commission notes that this will allow the coordination of relief implementation activities, such as consumer notifications and updates to networks and databases. This approach will provide efficiencies to TSPs and result in more consistent messaging to consumers.
19. The Commission notes that, because 10-digit local dialing is already in place for area codes 438 and 514, relief implementation will require only the addition of the new area code to switching equipment and databases, for both carriers and customers.

⁶ These methods included area code splits, area code boundary re-alignments, and concentrated overlay area codes.

20. Accordingly, the Commission determines that relief is to be implemented by 22 October 2022.

Planning document and relief implementation plan

21. The Commission notes that the planning document and relief implementation plan set out how area code relief is to be provided and include, among other things, a schedule for relief implementation, as well as consumer communications and network provider activities that are consistent with the steps identified in the Guideline. As such, these documents set out implementation timeframes that TSPs can follow to meet the relief implementation date.

Conclusion

22. In light of all the above, the Commission **approves** the report, including the proposed planning document and relief implementation plan, and determines that
- the regions served by area codes 438 and 514 are to be overlaid with a new area code, effective **22 October 2022**; and
 - area code 263 is to be used as the new distributed overlay area code.

Policy Directions

23. In accordance with subparagraph 1(b)(1) of the 2006 Policy Direction⁷, the Commission considers that approval of the report will advance the policy objective set out in paragraph 7(f) of the *Telecommunications Act*.⁸
24. In accordance with the 2019 Policy Direction,⁹ the Commission considers that its decision can promote competition, affordability, and consumer interests, because it will ensure that carriers and other TSPs have an adequate supply of telephone numbers and can continue to compete and provide existing and new innovative communications services to Canadian consumers.

Secretary General

⁷ *Order issuing a Direction to the CRTC on Implementing the Canadian Telecommunications Policy Objectives*. SOR/2006-355, 14 December 2006

⁸ 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.

⁹ *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

Related documents

- *Establishment of a CISC ad hoc committee for relief planning for area codes 438 and 514 in Montreal, Quebec*, Telecom Notice of Consultation CRTC 2020-37, 30 January 2020
- *CISC Canadian Steering Committee on Numbering – Consensus report CNRE119A regarding setting aside numbering plan area (NPA) codes to be used for relief of existing Canadian NPAs forecast to exhaust in the next 10 years*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2017-38, 3 February 2017