



Telecom Decision CRTC 2021-393

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Relief for area code complex 819/873 in Western Quebec

The Commission determines that relief for area code complex 819/873 in Western Quebec is to be provided by implementing a distributed overlay of new area code 468, effective **22 October 2022**. In addition, the Commission approves the 819/873 relief planning committee's report, including the Relief Implementation Schedule, as well as the Consumer Awareness Program and the Network Implementation Plan.

Introduction

1. In Telecom Decision 2017-38, the Commission set aside area code 468 for future relief for area code complex 819/873.¹ Task Information Form (TIF) Report #1 recommended the implementation of a distributed overlay² area code (468) for the area currently served by the 819/873 area code complex, with a relief implementation date of 22 October 2022.
2. On 20 September 2019, the Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA) advised Commission staff that area code complex 819/873 was projected to exhaust by March 2025 and requested that an ad-hoc relief planning committee (RPC) be formed via the issuance of a Notice of Consultation. On 30 January 2020, the Commission issued Telecom Notice of Consultation 2020-34, in which it established a CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC) ad-hoc RPC for planning relief for the 819/873 complex. The RPC was to examine area code relief options and to make recommendations for providing relief for the pending numbering exhaust.

¹ Due to an ever-increasing demand for telephone numbers in some areas, more than one area code is required for the same geographical area. These multiple area codes serving the same geographical area are referred to as area code complexes.

² When an area code or area code complex runs out of assignable Central Office (CO) codes, a new area code is added to the geographic area served by the original area code(s). This new area code is referred to as an overlay on the original area code(s) and when it provides telephone numbers to the same geographical area as the original area code(s) it is said to be a distributed overlay area code.

3. On 23 February 2021, the CNA published the January 2021 Relief Numbering Resource Utilization Forecast (R-NRUF)³ results, which indicated that the projected exhaust date had advanced to July 2023.
4. On 19 August 2021, the CNA released the July R-NRUF results, which indicated that the projected exhaust date for area code complex 819/873 had advanced from July 2023 to May 2023 (a two-month advancement). Based on the progress in relief planning and per section 9.1 of the Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline, the CNA declared that area code complex 819/873 had entered into a jeopardy condition.
5. Contributions were submitted to the RPC on 18 March 2021 that aided in the preparation of the planning document and relief implementation plan. These documents are included in TIF Report #1, dated 20 April 2021.

Report

6. On 27 August 2021, the CISC approved and forwarded to the Commission for its approval TIF Report #1. This report presents the numbering plan area (NPA) 819/873 RPC planning document and relief implementation plan intended for the implementation of area code relief for Western Quebec served by area code complex 819/873.
7. In the report, the RPC recommended that:
 - the relief method be a distributed overlay area code on area code complex 819/873;
 - the new area code be 468, per Telecom Decision 2017-38; and
 - the relief implementation date be 22 October 2022.
8. The relief implementation plan includes the recommendations in the planning document and establishes a public framework and timeframe for the steps required to implement the area code relief. It also includes the activities, deliverables, and issues impacting more than one telecommunications service provider (TSP). It does not cover activities internal to individual TSPs.

Should the Commission approve the report?

Relief method

9. As set out in the Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline, the only relief measure now considered in Canada is the distributed overlay method. The advantage of the overlay relief method is that it does not require customers to change their telephone

³ A Relief Numbering Resource Utilization Forecast is conducted every six months by the CNA for area codes that are within the relief planning window of 72 months, which has recently been reduced to 36 months. Based on forecasts provided by carriers, the CNA is able to project when an area code is expected to run out of assignable CO codes.

numbers, as was required by other methods in the past. The distributed overlay does not increase the number of separate areas for which future relief planning must be considered, and thereby does not increase the administrative burden on the telecommunications industry.

10. A mandatory requirement for overlay area codes is 10-digit local dialing in order to differentiate between the same central office codes in different area codes serving the same geographical area. However, in this case, 10-digit local dialing is already in place for the area served by area code complex 819/873.
11. As there is already one distributed overlay area code in place over the original area code 819, the only logical method for providing further area code relief is the addition of another distributed overlay area code.

Relief area code

12. In its TIF Report #119, the Canadian Steering Committee on Numbering (CSCN) submitted recommendations for the pre-selection of certain area codes and set these aside for relief of Canadian area codes that were expected to exhaust within the next ten years (by 2027). The Commission approved this report in Telecom Decision 2017-38. The report included area code 468 as a future area code for relief of area code complex 819/873. The RPC has recommended that area code 468 should be the relief area code for area code complex 819/873.

Implementation date

13. The RPC recommended that the new relief area code should be activated by 22 October 2022, which is nine months before the projected exhaust date of July 2023 as indicated in the January 2021 R-NRUF. This was the projected exhaust date at the time that the RPC finalized its recommendations in the TIF Report. However, the July 2021 R-NRUF indicated that the projected exhaust date had advanced to May 2023, resulting in the recommended relief date being seven months prior to the current May 2023 projected exhaust date.
14. The seven-month relief implementation lead time prior to the May 2023 projected exhaust date is one month more than the six-month period included in recent changes to the Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline approved by the Commission.⁴ Given that the projected exhaust date is within the next two years and that the CNA has declared a jeopardy condition a short period between the projected exhaust date and relief implementation is warranted as it provides a longer time for TSPs and telecommunications services customers to make the necessary changes to support the new area code, while providing a small buffer before the area code complex exhausts.

⁴ See Telecom Decision 2021-217.

15. As 10-digit local dialing is already in place, implementation will only require the addition of the new area code to the 819/873 complex already in place. This will be the case for both carriers' and customers' switching equipment and databases.
16. Further, having the same relief implementation date as that for two adjacent area code complexes currently undergoing relief implementation⁵ allows for coordinated implementation activities, such as consumer notifications. Such coordinated activities can provide efficiencies to telecommunications carriers since networks and databases can be updated at the same time for all three area code complexes. Further, this approach allows for more consistent messaging to consumers in the affected adjacent area code complexes.
17. Accordingly, the Commission determines that area code relief will take effect on 22 October 2022.

Planning document and relief implementation plan

18. The planning document contains the RPC's conclusions and recommendations. The main topics in the planning document are the relief planning process, an analysis of the relief options, dialing plan changes (if any), a jeopardy contingency plan,⁶ the proposed relief area code, and a proposed implementation schedule.
19. The relief implementation plan is intended to establish the framework and timeframe for implementing the new distributed overlay area code 468. The relief implementation plan summarizes the key points in the planning document, such as the relief method, the relief area code, and the implementation date for the new distributed overlay area code. The relief implementation plan also includes a detailed step-by-step relief implementation schedule that covers all the activities by various stakeholders, such as the CNA, the Commission, TSPs, and others.
20. The relief implementation plan also establishes the Consumer Awareness Task Force and the Network Implementation Task Force. The required activities of these two groups are contained in the Consumer Awareness Program and the Network Implementation Plan, which are attachments to the relief implementation plan.

⁵ The two other area code complexes currently undergoing area code relief activities are Montreal (438/514) and the area around Montreal (450/579), both of which have the same relief implementation date of 22 October 2022.

⁶ A jeopardy condition plan is a contingency plan that would be implemented in the event that the forecasted or actual demand for CO codes exceeds the quantity of CO codes available for assignment before relief (i.e. a new area code) can be implemented.

Conclusion

21. In light of all the above, the Commission **approves** the 819/873 relief planning committee's report, including the revised relief implementation plan – which includes the Relief Implementation Schedule, as well as the Consumer Awareness Program and the Network Implementation Plan – and determines that:

- the area served by area code complex 819/873 is to be overlaid with a new area code, effective **22 October 2022**; and
- area code 468 is to be used for area code relief.

Policy Directions

22. In accordance with subparagraph 1(b)(1) of the 2006 Policy Direction,⁷ the Commission considers that approval of the report will advance the policy objective set out in paragraph 7(f) of the *Telecommunications Act*.⁸

23. In accordance with the 2019 Policy Direction,⁹ the Commission considers that this decision can promote competition, affordability, and consumer interests by ensuring an adequate supply of telephone numbers to carriers and other TSPs so that they can continue to compete and provide existing and new innovative telecommunications services to Canadian consumers.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *CISC Canadian Steering Committee on Numbering – Consensus report CNRE126A – Revised Appendix B, Canadian NPA Relief Planning Timeline, to the Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2021-217, 8 July 2021
- *Establishment of a CISC ad hoc committee for relief planning for area codes 819 and 873 in western Quebec*, Telecom Notice of Consultation CRTC 2020-34, 30 January 2020
- *CISC Canadian Steering Committee on Numbering – Consensus report CNRE119A regarding setting aside numbering plan area (NPA) codes to*

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

be used for relief of existing Canadian NPAs forecast to exhaust in the next 10 years, Telecom Decision CRTC 2017-38, 3 February 2017