



Telecom Order CRTC 2025-207

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Gatineau, 15 August 2025

Public record: Tariff Notice 386

Saskatchewan Telecommunications – Removal of print directory obligation

Summary

The Commission received an application from Saskatchewan Telecommunications (SaskTel) proposing changes to its General Tariff to remove the requirement to provide a printed telephone directory to customers.

In this order, the Commission approves SaskTel's application. The tariff revisions will remove terms and conditions that are no longer required following the Commission's elimination of the basic service objective in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496. The Commission's determinations in the proceeding that led to Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496 were in part based on comments from parties which noted that directory information can now be more readily found by digital means.

The changes will therefore ensure that the company's tariff accurately reflects the Commission's previous determinations and the current tariffed services that are available to customers.

A dissenting opinion by Commissioner Bram Abramson is attached to this order.

Application

1. On 11 March 2025, the Commission received an application from Saskatchewan Telecommunications (SaskTel) proposing changes to Item 66 – Telephone Directories of its General Tariff to remove the requirement to provide a printed telephone directory to customers.
2. SaskTel noted that the Commission approved similar applications in Telecom Order 2024-220 and gave interim approval to a similar application in Telecom Order 2025-3.
3. SaskTel requested an effective date of 31 March 2025.
4. The Commission did not receive any interventions regarding the application.

Commission's analysis

5. In Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496, the Commission eliminated the basic service objective, which included the requirement to provide printed directories to customers in regulated areas upon request. The Commission noted that there was almost universal access in Canada to the level of service set out in the basic service objective and that the intended goal of the basic service objective had been achieved.
6. In coming to its determinations in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496, the Commission sought comments on what changes, if any, should be made to the basic service objective, which included the requirement to provide printed directories upon request. During that proceeding, while some parties highlighted the importance of printed directories, many parties submitted that the Commission should no longer mandate the provision of printed directories, and that directory information can be more readily found by digital means. Furthermore, technology has evolved to focus more on mobile and broadband services,¹ and the Commission recognized that it was appropriate to transition its regulatory frameworks and measures from being voice-centric to broadband-centric. Accordingly, among other measures, the Commission eliminated the basic service objective and the requirement to provide printed directories.
7. The proposed tariff revisions would eliminate terms and conditions that are no longer required, as a result of the Commission's determinations in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496. These revisions would ensure that SaskTel's tariff pages accurately reflect the Commission's determinations and the offerings available to customers. Therefore, the Commission finds the proposed revisions to be appropriate.

Conclusion

8. In light of all of the above, the Commission approves, by majority decision, SaskTel's application.
9. Revised tariff pages are to be issued within 10 calendar days of the date of this order. Revised tariff pages can be submitted to the Commission without a description page or a request for approval; a tariff application is not required.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Bruce Telecom – Removal of print directory obligation*, Telecom Order CRTC 2025-208, 15 August 2025

¹ This evolution towards mobile and broadband services also means that Canadians rely more on mobile phone numbers and email addresses, neither of which are included in print directories.

- *Independent Telecommunications Providers Association – Final approval of a tariff application*, Telecom Order CRTC 2025-168, 3 July 2025
- *Independent Telecommunications Providers Association – Interim approval of a tariff application*, Telecom Order CRTC 2025-3, 10 January 2025
- *Various companies – Removal of print directory obligation*, Telecom Order CRTC 2024-220, 25 September 2024
- *Various companies – Removal of print directory obligation and Service Improvement Plan*, Telecom Order CRTC 2024-219, 25 September 2024
- *Modern telecommunications services – The path forward for Canada’s digital economy*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-496, 21 December 2016
- *Obligation to serve and other matters*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2011-291, 3 May 2011
- *Forbearance from the regulation of retail local exchange services*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2006-15 (Consolidated version), 6 April 2006; as amended by Order in Council P.C. 2007-532, 4 April 2007

Dissenting opinion of Commissioner Bram Abramson

1. In 1909, when then-Governor-General the Earl Grey (of Grey Cup, though not tea, fame) and then-Premier Walter Scott laid the cornerstone of Saskatchewan's Legislative Building, they inserted a time capsule. It remained nestled, and undisturbed, until the 2011 run-up to the legislative centenary. Among the items unearthed was a 1909 book listing government offices and their phone numbers.
2. The artifact was a century old and had been chosen to represent another era. But it held little mystery. Over the century that separated the capsule's gifters from its recipients, generations had grown up using ever-thicker versions to look up neighbours, find a locksmith, block pucks, or see over a steering wheel. It was a phone book.
3. The majority's decision ends that era in yet another part of Canada. No more will Saskatchewan Telecommunications pledge that "[c]ustomers are entitled to receive, without charge, as many copies of the most recent telephone directory for their district, both white and yellow pages, and as many copies of subsequent directories as they are published, as reasonably required, up to a maximum of one per telephone." That language is now struck from its General Tariff.
4. In truth, that era had been winding down for some time. Today's decision is simply the final step in a process that was well underway:
 - In 2007, when Cabinet "forbore" from regulating exchanges served by both a wireless provider and a second wireline phone company (like a cable provider), we still required phone books, expressing concern that "the operation of market forces" might not "result in residential and business customers receiving a comprehensive phone directory and primary listings at a reasonable cost."¹
 - But by 2010 we were comfortable shifting to an opt-in-only model for directory distribution in forborne² and, in 2011, regulated³ exchanges.
 - By 2016, directory obligations were eliminated from forborne exchanges altogether,⁴ leaving only regulated exchanges—which lack the requisite cable company (or other wireline voice competitor) and wireless provider alongside the incumbent—as places where subscribers could demand a telephone directory as of right.

¹ See Telecom Decision 2006-15 (Consolidated version), paragraphs 398-399 and [Commission Staff Letter](#), 2 June 2010, footnote 3 and accompanying text.

² See [Commission Staff Letter](#), 2 June 2010.

³ See Telecom Regulatory Policy 2011-291, paragraph 44.

⁴ See paragraph 5 of the majority decision, citing Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496, paragraph 185.

5. It is those regulated exchanges, where the phone directory obligation made its last stand, that today's majority decision targets, and from which I dissent.
6. I do not do so out of nostalgia. Wherever mobile and broadband services, and the software-based applications that these enable, have displaced the landline—the need for a phone book has waned accordingly. But the regulated exchanges where this obligation persisted are predominantly rural and remote. They are precisely where wireline and wireless competition is lacking, and where landlines often remain critical.
7. Nor do I dissent because the majority's approach is facially unreasonable. Through my own lens as an urban and heavy user of mobile and broadband services, it is hard to imagine why anyone would still need a phone book.
8. But we consult to hear the perspectives of others, not to echo our own. When we began the phone book's final deregulatory push in a pair of decisions last year⁵—both, like this one, majority decisions of the Commission's Telecommunications Committee⁶—I found that the majority had (a) mischaracterized the regulatory history it relies on, (b) misapprehended the extent to which the matter had been considered previously, and (c) failed to consult those affected. I also noted that (d) the expected wave of similar applications would call into question whether taking this *ad hoc* route, rather than consulting on an industry-wide approach, would even be more efficient.
9. In dissenting today, I maintain those concerns.
10. First, the majority implies that Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496 definitively resolved this issue. It did not. That decision merely established an approach whereby the Commission, then seized with a broad range of matters, could later scrutinize specific tariff elements as carriers sought to remove them: “The elimination of the basic service objective will *not impede the continued provision* of local voice service

⁵ Telecom Orders 2024-219 and 2024-220. See also Telecom Order 2025-168, which I opted to be set out as a majority decision rather than include a dissenting opinion. (The *Rules of conduct for voting at Commission meetings* prescribe that (A) members may vote to approve, abstain, or deny; and (B) on voting to deny, a member may request that (1) the minutes record only a lack of unanimity, (2) their negative vote be registered in meeting minutes, (3) their vote be registered in minutes and the decision be set out publicly as a “majority decision”, or (4) their vote be registered in minutes and they reserve the right to write a dissent.)

⁶ This was a decision of the Telecommunications Committee on behalf of the Commission. See *Telecommunications Committee*, By-Law No. 10 (CRTC), paragraph (e): “[a]ny act or thing done by the Telecommunications Committee shall be deemed to be an act or thing done by the members [...]”. This delegating by-law was, in turn, made pursuant to paragraph 11(1)(b) and subsection 12(3) of the *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act*, providing for duties to be delegated to standing committees by by-law. Such delegation to standing committees, whose remit is made explicit through by-law, is distinguished from other forms of delegation, like the assignment of particular cases and of panels to those cases.

in regulated exchanges since the associated rates, terms, and conditions *are set out in the ILECs' respective tariffs.*⁷

11. In fact, by declining to invite immediate tariff changes in 2016, the Commission ensured it would revisit these obligations more carefully when changes were sought. The series of decisions beginning last year, with Telecom Orders 2024-219 and 2024-220, provided that opportunity. Instead, in a sleight of hand, we now say we already exhausted the matter.
12. Second, and relatedly, the majority decision holds—wrongly, in my view—that Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496 received “many” submissions on directory information. But only two interveners at the public hearing raised the issue unprompted. Others, when prompted, responded briefly before returning to subjects they were actually prepared to answer. The written record offers little more. That is unsurprising: the continuing relevance of the directory obligation in regulated, competition-scarce exchanges simply wasn’t a focus. In total, telephone directories appear in just 1.2 percent of the transcript’s paragraphs, and just one of Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496’s 259 paragraphs.
13. Third, when we reserve directory obligations for future consideration only to declare, once we get there, that we’ve already been where we are going, affected consumers never find their way to having a say. As a public-interest regulator, our social licence to operate is tied to remaining responsive to those impacted by our decisions. That requires steps, like notifying the public, or notifying journalists who help the public stay informed, that we did not take: about this consultation, about that of the related consultation resulting in Telecom Order 2025-208, or about the three preceding it.⁸ I have elsewhere participated in explanations as to why our streamlined tariff process, though efficient, can obscure files that engage meaningful consumer or competitor interests.⁹
14. Finally, it is not even clear that this obscure-but-piecemeal approach achieves efficiency. This Order and the related Telecom Order 2025-208 bring the tally on this topic to five. More will surely come. A single public proceeding that elicited a broad range of written submissions and replies could have resolved this issue for all phone companies. It would have been no less effective, and fostered both policy consistency and a consultative approach that fosters trust.
15. The lesson here extends beyond telephone directories. When a new time capsule was prepared in 2012 to fill the Legislative Building’s cornerstone, talk centred on

⁷ Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-496, paragraph 185 (emphasis added).

⁸ See footnote 5, above.

⁹ Telecom Order 2024-219, dissenting opinion of Commissioner Abramson, paragraph 12; Telecom Order 2025-74, dissenting opinion of Commissioners Abramson and Anderson, paragraphs 11-18.

dropping in an iPad, not a phone book. But our responsibility as regulators is to ensure we hear from a full range of interveners, not just frequent or experienced ones, who generally hail from industry; and that we use processes that are fair, efficient, and equipped to help us think broadly, meaningfully, and coherently about the regulatory challenges before us. Subsequent applicants, who will have the opportunity to include with their applications some evidence of subscriber consultation, would do well to keep this in mind.