Telecom Order CRTC 2026-179

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Gatineau, 21 July 2026

Public record: Tariff Notice 601

Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership – Withdrawal of residential services with no customers

Summary

The Commission received an application from Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership (Bell Aliant). In the application, Bell Aliant proposed to withdraw several items from its General Tariff for residential services but to keep the services available to business customers.

Bell Aliant has no residential customers currently subscribed to these services, and expects no future demand given that they are legacy services that predate modern alternatives. In addition, the withdrawal of these services would reduce unnecessary regulatory burden of maintaining associated tariffs.

Accordingly, the Commission approves Bell Aliant's application.

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

Application

1. The Commission received an application from Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership (Bell Aliant), dated 30 January 2026. In the application, Bell Aliant proposed to withdraw the following items from its General Tariff for residential customers but to keep the services available to business customers:

    - Item 352 – Intercommunicating Systems;
    - Item 354 – Suppressed Ringing Service (SRS);
    - Item 400 – Remote Call Forwarding Service;
    - Item 401.1 – Foreign Exchange Service;
    - Item 500 – DMS [Digital Multiplex System] Data Service; and
    - Item 506 – Microlink Service.

2. Bell Aliant submitted that these are legacy services that predate modern alternative services. The company indicated that there are no residential customers currently subscribed to these services. It also does not expect any new demand because affordable alternative services are available. Given that there are no residential customers subscribed to these services, Bell Aliant indicated that no customer notice was required.

3. For each tariff item, Bell Aliant identified the following available modern alternatives:

   - Item 352 – Intercommunicating Systems: This refers to an arrangement that enables communication between telephones without a connection to an exchange or message toll service.

     - Residential telephone systems that are available at consumer electronics stores and have a built-in intercommunication feature, enabling customers to access the function without additional network provisioning from Bell Aliant

     - Smart home systems

     - Mobile wireless texting (SMS [Short Message Service]), instant messaging, or other similar features on wireless or home devices

   - Item 354 – Suppressed Ringing Service (SRS): This service enables a service provider to deliver messages to telephones connected to SRS-subscribed telephone lines without causing the telephone to ring.

     - Residential telephones or systems that are available at a variety of electronics stores that can have a built-in feature that enables the ringer to be suppressed

   - Item 400 – Remote Call Forwarding Service: This service provides customers with a telephone number in a remote exchange area outside the local calling area where the customer's primary service is located. Calls placed to the remote call forwarding number are automatically redialed and forwarded to a number chosen by the customer using long-distance routing.

     - Mobile wireless service (with or without call forwarding) and/or access-independent voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) services

   - Item 401.1 – Foreign Exchange Service: This service provides customers with a primary service from a foreign exchange area outside the customer's local calling area.

     - Mobile wireless service (with or without call forwarding) and/or access-independent VoIP services

- Item 500 – DMS Data Service: This service provides data transmission up to 64 kilobits per second (Kbps) over the public switched network.
    - Higher-speed digital subscriber line (DSL), cable, and fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) retail Internet services
    - Mobile wireless data services
- Item 506 – Microlink Service: This service enables the digital transmission of information between the company’s serving wire centre and compatible terminal equipment located at the customer’s premises. It is a low-speed data connection service used historically by business customers to establish connections between small offices with low bandwidth requirements.
    - Higher-speed DSL, cable, and FTTP retail Internet services
    - Mobile wireless data services

4. Bell Aliant requested an effective date of 31 March 2026 for the withdrawal of these items.

5. The Commission did not receive any interventions regarding the application.

Commission’s analysis

6. In compliance with the procedure set out in Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-455-1, Bell Aliant provided the Commission with (i) a description of the services proposed to be withdrawn, (ii) the proposed withdrawal date, (iii) rationale for the withdrawal, and (iv) the number of customers affected. Additionally, since none of the services Bell Aliant is proposing to withdraw have any current residential customers, Bell Aliant did not need to send notice to affected customers.

7. The maintenance of tariffs for legacy services with no customers creates an unnecessary regulatory burden for both service providers and the Commission. Because there are no residential customers subscribed to these services, the proposed withdrawal would not cause any loss of service to customers. Additionally, more efficient and affordable alternatives are available for residential customers. The services would also continue to be available to business customers, and the proposed tariff pages confirm that no existing business customers would be affected.

8. The Commission considers that Bell Aliant’s proposed withdrawal is reasonable, as it will reduce the regulatory burden of maintaining associated tariffs while accurately reflecting the current market landscape.

Conclusion

9. In light of all of the above, the Commission approves, by majority decision, Bell Aliant's application, effective the date of this order.

10. 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

Concurring opinion of Commissioner Bram Abramson

1. As the year 2000 approached, many businesses confronted a sudden problem. Programmers familiar with Common Business-Oriented Language (COBOL), a programming language developed in 1959 and long thought obsolete, were suddenly needed urgently. It turned out that systems across banking, government, insurance, transportation, utilities, and other sectors still depended on COBOL. The language had not disappeared simply because newer technologies had overtaken it, or because it was no longer in prominent view. It was deeply embedded in industry systems and processes. Its replacement would have required significant re-engineering, coordination, and operational retooling. So it persisted.

2. I concur with the Telecommunications Committee's decision[1] to grant Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership's application to withdraw six tariffed services from prospective residential customers. I write separately to caution that future withdrawal of these services from existing business users may raise different timing and transition issues.

3. The six services now withdrawn from residential availability reflect an important transitional phase in telecommunications history. DMS Data Service and Microlink were part of the public switched telephone network's evolution towards digital data services before the Internet's rise displaced that path. Suppressed Ringing Services were part of yesteryear's network of things, providing a machine-to-provider signalling feature for applications like utility meter-reading, alarm monitoring, and remote updates to in-home devices. Intercommunicating Systems established virtual connections that looked more like private messaging or intercom nodes than public telephony. Foreign Exchange Service and Remote Call Forwarding were ways of giving remote users a local presence at a time when telephone number geography mattered intensely: these functions have largely migrated to wireless and to access-independent voice alternatives.

4. Withdrawal, rather than forbearance, is the right approach here. So is immediate effect. These are specific legacy telephone network services. Their tariffs describe particular arrangements, technologies, and network features, not broad technology-neutral service markets that would first require a forbearance analysis under the *Telecommunications Act*.[2] In terms of timing, there is no residential customer base whose interests require continued protection.

5. That may not be true for existing business users. A service may be obsolete as a matter of network evolution and, at the same time, operationally important to users who have built

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[1] On behalf of the Commission: *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 […]"), pursuant to paragraph 11(1)(b) and subsection 12(3) of the *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act* (duties delegated to standing committees by by-law, as distinguished from assigning a particular file to a panel: *Shoan v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2016 FCA 261, para 6).
[2] Subsection 34(2) ("shall"). On the relationship between forbearance and withdrawal see, for instance, dissent to Telecom Order 2026-44, paragraphs 4 to 8.

equipment, operations, and customer processes around it. This is especially true for basic data connectivity services,[3] like DMS Data and Microlink, that anchored equipment ecosystems.

6. To migrate to alternative services, business users may need to price and procure new equipment, software, or both. They may have to revise internal processes, policies, rules, and procedures. Staff may need retraining. Customer billing, service delivery, monitoring, and support processes require review. All of these represent switching costs and planning cycles that may take months or years.[4] Yet Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-455-1 provides that withdrawal may be effective just 60 calendar days from a withdrawal application.

7. Assiduous reviewers of CRTC tariff proceedings will have been alerted by this decision to the possibility of further withdrawal applications for the business versions of these six services. But very few businesses, and very few trade associations, monitor our tariff proceedings assiduously. Nor do we make it especially easy to do so.[5]

8. This suggests two practical points.

9. First, Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership and any relevant affiliates ought to take care to provide clear notice long in advance of any subsequent withdrawal application that these services will be sunsetting and that business users ought to begin planning to replace them immediately, before any formal withdrawal clock begins to run.

10. Second, the Commission should consider its provisions for withdrawal notices' reach and timing. A one-size-fits-all 60-day rule may not be practical for services whose uses, lifecycles, and dependencies differ materially. A more differentiated approach requiring the applicant to demonstrate it has adopted a notice period appropriate to the service's uses, lifecycles, and customer base would be preferable.

11. Neither point affects the disposition of the present application. Both speak to how to approach similar issues in the future. The year 2000 reminded us that technological obsolescence does not, by itself, say whether a system remains operationally important, how deeply it is embedded, or how long a migration process ought reasonably to take. Tariff withdrawal processes ought to reflect this.

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[3] Services that offer a pure data transmission capability over a communications path that is virtually transparent in terms of its interaction with information: Telecom Decision 84-18, subsection II.C.
[4] A similar issue was raised in Telecom Decision 2025-310 and my attached dissent.
[5] I have elsewhere referred to this approach as an obscured rocket docket, or conveyor-belt processing. See dissents to Telecom Orders 2025-74 and 2025-282.

Related documents

- *Bell Canada – Withdrawal of certain features of Bell Total Connect for Small Business service,* Telecom Order CRTC 2026-44, 12 March 2026
- *Bell Canada – Application requesting forbearance from the regulation of Digital Exchange Access Service*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2025-310, 20 November 2025
- *Bell Canada – Tariff Notice 7716 – Destandardization of DS-1 Access services,* Telecom Order CRTC 2025-282, 30 October 2025
- *Northwestel Inc. – Introduction of Winback Discount for Residential Unlimited Internet Packages,* Telecom Order CRTC 2025-74, 10 March 2025
- *Approval processes for tariff applications and intercarrier agreements*, Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2010-455-1, 19 February 2016
- *Enhanced Services,* Telecom Decision CRTC 84-18, 12 July 1984