



Telecom Decision CRTC 2026-190

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Relief for area code complex 782/902 in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Summary

Telephone numbers are critical to our modern communications system. According to the Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA), the region served by area codes 782 and 902 in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island is in need of a new area code by 2029 to ensure Canadians continue to have access to this finite resource.

In Telecom Notice of Consultation 2025-155, the Commission directed the CNA to chair an ad hoc committee to consider the introduction of new numbering resources within this region. In response, the CNA's ad hoc committee filed a report recommending the introduction of a new area code to increase the availability of telephone numbers in the region.

In this decision, the Commission approves the ad hoc committee's report and is implementing area code 851, effective 27 May 2028.

Introduction

1. The Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA)¹ manages numbering resources in Canada in accordance with various Commission-approved numbering guidelines. The [Canadian Numbering Resource Utilization Forecast \(C-NRUF\) Guideline](#) describes how to conduct number usage forecasts, which allow the CNA to determine when new numbers will be needed. The [Canadian NPA \[Numbering Plan Area\] Relief Planning Guideline](#) provides the framework for addressing area code exhaust in Canada. That guideline establishes a step-by-step process to be followed by the CNA and relief planning committees (RPCs). The Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline

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.

requires relief planning activities to begin if an area code is projected to need new resources within the next 36 months.

2. The telecommunications industry conducts area code relief planning in a public manner through an ad hoc RPC under the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC).²
3. While thousand-block pooling is expected to help with number conservation, routine relief planning exercises conducted in accordance with relevant numbering guidelines will continue to play an important role in responsible and effective numbering management.
4. In March 2025, the CNA advised the Commission that area code complex³ 782/902 in the provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island required a new area code by June 2028 to ensure Canadians continue to have access to new telephone numbers as needed.
5. The Commission issued Telecom Notice of Consultation 2025-155 on 23 June 2025, in which it established a CISC ad hoc relief planning committee (ad hoc committee) chaired by the CNA for planning a new numbering resource in the 782/902 area code complex. The ad hoc committee was to examine options and make recommendations for increasing telephone number availability in the region.
6. Subsequently, in July 2025, the CNA issued a [Proposal for Relief of an Overlay NPA Complex](#) for review by the ad hoc committee. However, the ad hoc committee was paused following the July 2025 numbering forecast results, which indicated that the 782/902 area code complex no longer needed relief.
7. In March 2026, the ad hoc committee resumed work after the January 2026 numbering forecast results indicated that the 782/902 area code complex was in need of a new area code by February 2029. As a result, the ad hoc committee filed report [782-902RE01B](#) (the report) with CISC in May 2026.

The report

8. In the report, the ad hoc committee recommended that:

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 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.

- the relief method be a distributed overlay⁴ area code on area code complex 782/902;
 - the new area code be 851; and
 - the implementation date for the new area code be 27 May 2028 to provide carriers and customers with advanced notification and sufficient lead time for implementation in area code complex 782/902.
9. Along with the report, the ad hoc committee submitted a planning document, which included analyses of the various options considered for providing additional number resources and recommendations on how they should be implemented. The ad hoc committee also submitted a relief implementation plan, which included the detailed steps to be taken by all affected parties to implement a new area code.

Should the Commission approve the report?

Relief method

10. As set out in the [Canadian NPA Relief Planning Guideline](#), the only relief measure now considered in Canada is the distributed overlay method. This method does not require customers to change their telephone numbers, as other previous methods did,⁵ nor does it increase the administrative burden on the telecommunications industry.
11. In Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, there is already a distributed overlay area code in place over the original area code 902. The Commission considers the most logical method for providing access to new telephone numbers is the addition of another distributed overlay area code.

Relief area codes

12. In Telecom Decision 2022-308, the Commission directed the CNA to set aside area code 851 as the future area code for area code complex 782/902. The Commission therefore determines that area code 851 is to be used to add telephone numbers in area code complex 782/902.

⁴ When an area code or area code complex runs out of assignable central office 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). When it provides telephone numbers to the same geographical area as the original area code(s), it is considered a distributed overlay area code.

⁵ Previous methods included area code splits, area code boundary realignments, and concentrated overlay area codes.

Implementation date

13. As of the CNA's January 2026 numbering resource utilization forecast, the CNA projects that area code complex 782/902 will need a new area code by February 2029.
14. The NPA Relief Planning Guideline sets out a six-months-to-exhaust lead time for the implementation of new area codes.
15. The ad hoc committee recommended that the new area code 851 be activated by 27 May 2028, which is 10 months before the projected exhaust date of February 2029. This additional lead time allows for volatility in the projected date so that if it were to advance by a few months, there would be no need to review the ad hoc committee's proposed relief implementation plans. This timing also provides telephone service providers and customers the necessary time to implement the new area code into their systems, databases, and telecommunications equipment.
16. Accordingly, the Commission determines that area code 851 is to be used as the new area code for area code complex 782/902, effective **27 May 2028**.

Conclusion

17. In light of all of the above, the Commission:

- approves report [782-902RE01B](#), including the planning document and relief implementation plan; and
- determines that area code 851, to be implemented as the new area code for area code complex 782/902 in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, will take effect on **27 May 2028**.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Establishment of a CISC ad hoc committee for relief planning for area codes 782 and 902 in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island*, Telecom Notice of Consultation CRTC 2025-155, 23 June 2025
- *CISC Canadian Steering Committee on Numbering – Consensus report CNRE134A regarding setting aside five area codes for future relief of exhausting area code complexes*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2022-308, 8 November 2022