



Telecom Order CRTC 2026-44

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Gatineau, 12 March 2026

Public record: Tariff Notice 7722

Bell Canada – Withdrawal of certain features of Bell Total Connect for Small Business service

Summary

The Commission received an application from Bell Canada proposing to withdraw certain features of its Bell Total Connect for Small Business service.

The equipment used to support these features has reached its end of life and cannot be replaced, and no customer has requested the continuation or extension of these features. Accordingly, the Commission approves Bell Canada's application.

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

Application

1. The Commission received an application from Bell Canada, dated 18 July 2025, proposing to withdraw the Soft Client,¹ Mobile Application,² and Call Dashboard³ features (marketed as “Chat”, “Presence Status”, and “File Transfer”, respectively) from its Bell Total Connect for Small Business service under its General Tariff, Item 7028.
2. These features were offered in Bell Canada's incumbent operating territory in Ontario and Quebec.
3. Bell Canada explained that the equipment used to support the three features has reached its end of life and will no longer be supported by the vendor after 30 September 2025. According to Bell Canada, this means that these features will not function after that date, which makes their

¹ This feature consists of an instant messaging or chat function.

² As per Bell Canada's [website](#), this feature enables customers to make a call from their mobile device and have their unique business number appear as the outgoing number. The customer's business name will also appear on people's caller ID when using a mobile phone. It also includes a presence awareness functionality.

³ As per Bell Canada's [website](#), this feature is a desktop application for receptionists and executive assistants that provides switchboard capability, contact directories, and employees' phone status. Bell Canada's General Tariff adds that this feature allows the receptionist to “drag and drop” incoming calls onto one of several end-user devices such as an office phone, voicemail, and a wireless phone.

withdrawal necessary at this time. Bell Canada indicated that its vendor does not currently provide an alternative to these features.

4. Bell Canada submitted, in confidence, the number of customers subscribed to the Bell Total Connect for Small Business service. It also provided a copy of the notice it sent to affected customers on 18 July 2025.
5. Bell Canada also proposed some minor housekeeping changes in the list of features.
6. Bell Canada requested an effective date of 30 September 2025.
7. The Commission did not receive any interventions regarding the application.

Request for information

8. On 9 September 2025, Commission staff sent a request for information to Bell Canada.
9. In the request for information, Commission staff asked Bell Canada if the number of subscribers for the three features proposed to be withdrawn had remained stable over the last five years, whether any customers had requested the continuation or extension of these features since the withdrawal notice was issued, and whether it could suggest any alternatives to these features.
10. Bell Canada indicated that its systems do not enable it to quantify the change in demand for the three features over the last five years. However, the company submitted that it believes that use of the three features has fallen in recent years due to the popularity of Internet applications that provide advanced collaboration capabilities. Bell Canada also submitted that because the Soft Client and the Mobile Application features are included with the Collaborate Package of the Bell Total Connect for Small Business service, customers subscribing to those packages may not use those specific features.
11. Bell Canada also indicated that no customer has contacted it to request the continuation or extension of the three features since it issued the withdrawal notice.
12. Finally, Bell Canada noted that there are various other options that provide the same functionalities as the three features, including Internet applications that provide advanced collaboration capabilities, many of which are available for free or at low cost.

Commission's analysis

13. In compliance with the procedure set out in Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-455-1, Bell Canada provided the Commission with (i) a description of the services proposed to be withdrawn, (ii) the proposed withdrawal date, (iii) the rationale for the withdrawal, (iv) the number of customers affected, and (v) a copy of the notice to affected customers.

14. The notice that Bell Canada provided to affected customers specified that they can still make and receive voice calls, and that other features included in their current package will remain available.
15. Given that the features proposed to be withdrawn will no longer be supported by Bell Canada's vendor, that no customers have requested a continuation or extension of these features, and that Bell Canada complied with the relevant regulatory obligations, the Commission considers Bell Canada's proposal to be reasonable.
16. Bell Canada's housekeeping changes consist of punctuation changes in the list of features. The Commission considers these housekeeping changes appropriate to ensure clarity and consistency.
17. The Commission considers that approval of this application advances the policy objectives set out in paragraphs 7(c) and (f) of the *Telecommunications Act*.⁴

Conclusion

18. In light of all of the above, the Commission approves, by majority decision, Bell Canada's application.
19. 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

⁴ The cited policy objectives are: 7(c) to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness, at the national and international levels, of Canadian telecommunications; and (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.

Dissenting opinion of Commissioner Bram Abramson

1. Bell Total Connect for Small Business is a unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) offering. The market for UCaaS offerings is competitive. It may even be competitive enough to protect the interests of users.
2. This application is similar to Bell Canada's application to withdraw the Audio-conferencing feature of its Hosted Internet Protocol Voice service. I dissented in Telecom Order 2026-10, which granted withdrawal, because in my view the Commission ought to have considered forbearing from regulating audio-conferencing rather than fossilizing its continued regulation.
3. I dissent here on the same basis. Rather than dither about withdrawing one or another aspect of the tariff each time Bell Canada's vendor withdraws feature support, we should be asking a more fundamental question. Why regulate this at all?

What the Act requires

4. Consider a regulator instructed by Parliament to forbear where competition protects users. Evidence suggesting competition is placed squarely before it. What must the regulator do?
5. The *Telecommunications Act* (the Act) answers that question. Where a service is subject to sufficient competition to protect the interests of users, the Commission shall forbear.¹ That direction is mandatory. It is not contingent on the procedural posture of the application in which the evidence arises.
6. In this case, Bell Canada asserts that the functionality at issue has been displaced by widely available over-the-top services such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Webex. It reports declining usage. It states that no customers have requested continuation. It points to readily available substitutes. This evidence might, or might not, establish sufficient competition. But it is certainly enough to require the Commission to ask the question, build the record, and answer it.
7. My Telecommunications Committee colleagues² do not, on the majority, consider the Act to so require. Rather, the majority proceeds directly to withdrawal under the Commission's long-relied-upon two-legged framework.
8. Respectfully, this skips a step we are not only required to take, but whose outcome is cleaner and more effective. The destandardization and withdrawal framework may be administratively

¹ S.C. 1993, subsection 34(2).

² 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).

convenient. But a Commission-designed procedure cannot displace Parliament's direction.³ When evidence of competition is before us, the Act requires us first to confront it.

Practical consequences

9. Even if the Act did not compel us to confront competition before considering withdrawal, sound regulatory policy would. Withdrawal and forbearance are not interchangeable tools. Each produces different practical consequences.
10. Withdrawal freezes, without further review, the assumption that a service remains subject to market power. The tariff framework therefore continues to govern it. Removing features from the tariff does not change that underlying status. If the carrier later wishes to offer substantially similar functionality, it must again seek approval and justify its rates. In the meantime, it cannot offer those features.
11. Forbearance proceeds from the opposite premise. Where competition protects users, the Commission steps back and lets market forces determine whether, and on what terms, the service continues: this is economic forbearance. Further, even where competition is insufficient to protect users, there may nonetheless be public policy reasons for the Commission to step back so the service can continue to be offered to some, rather than to none: this is policy forbearance. In both cases, regulatory oversight remains. Continued recourse to the Commission's undue preference jurisdiction remains essential, particularly under policy forbearance. What falls away is unnecessary supervision and, with it, a one-size-fits all approach marked by ongoing restrictions that may do more harm than help.
12. The difference is both practical and institutional. Withdrawal perpetuates the service's regulated status, prohibiting its continued offering in the absence of the now deleted tariff. It is appropriate for narrowly framed, rarely used tariffed services that are technologically obsolete. But it focuses only on tidying the tariff book. Forbearance, by contrast, aligns regulation with competitive reality. Leavened by continuing supervision through the undue preference framework, forbearance avoids regulatory prohibitions that no longer serve their purpose. It lets often crucial services transition towards negotiated end-of-life arrangements in more orderly, proportionate, and user-appropriate ways.

A workable alternative

13. A straightforward alternative is readily at hand.
14. Elements of that alternative are already present in Commission decisions and opinions. Telecom Decision 2025-310 adopted a policy-based forbearance approach in Kuujjuaq, though undue preference jurisdiction ought to have been preserved. Dissenting and concurring opinions in

³ See, e.g., *Reference re: Section 101 of the Public Utilities Act*, 2017 NLCA 34 (CanLII), paragraph 17.

2024,⁴ 2025⁵, and 2026⁶ addressed statutory and practical issues raised by evidence of competition led in withdrawal applications. The resulting approach modernizes the streamlined destandardization and withdrawal process created in 2005⁷ and refined in 2008. It does so by introducing a parallel streamlined process for forbearance, creating a third track where there are now two.

15. The destandardization and withdrawal tracks remain appropriate in two circumstances:

- a) where a tariff is defined in narrow terms and has been replaced by more modern services not described by the tariff; or
- b) where on a balance of the public interest, the service is best no longer provided.

In either case, the service has reached the end of its useful life, and alternatives are either available or unnecessary. Destandardization and withdrawal remain the appropriate tools in those circumstances.

16. Forbearance, by contrast, is more appropriate:

- c) where competitors offer a service similar to the tariffed one throughout the relevant serving territory, or where barriers to entry are demonstrably low; or
- d) where on a balance of the public interest, the service ought neither be compelled, nor compelled to be shuttered at once.

17. Modernizing the 2005/2008 destandardization and withdrawal framework into a three-track service status change framework would function similarly to the existing process, with the following changes.

18. First, customers should receive clear notice and meaningful instructions on how to participate. The carrier applying for a service status change would notify affected stakeholders, including customers, individually and on its website, of the (i) service proposed, (ii) proposed change and effective date, (iii) rationale for the change, and (iv) functional substitutes customers might consider, if any.⁸

⁴ Dissenting opinion to Telecom Order 2024-269, paragraph 17.

⁵ Concurring opinion to Telecom Order 2025-228, paragraph 13.

⁶ Dissenting opinion to Telecom Order 2026-10, paragraph 10.

⁷ Telecom Circular 2005-7.

⁸ At present, the Commission “encourages” identification of substitute services, but does not require it: Telecom Decision 2008-22, Appendix, paragraph 1.

19. Second, the carrier's application would include information similar to that currently required: (i) the tariff and its regulatory history; (ii) a copy of the stakeholder notices, with a description of how, when, and to which classes of stakeholder they were distributed; (iii) all of the information elements to be contained in customer notices; and (iv) in confidence, the number of customers affected and number notified.
20. However, the application would also include (v) evidence relevant to the status of competition, or lack of it, for the tariffed service within the carrier's serving territory; and (vi) any other information the applicant believes is relevant, having regard for the four grounds identified in paragraphs 15 and 16.
21. Such information might show that the service has been replaced; is subject to competition, suggesting forbearance; or that, in the absence of competition, the public interest favours either withdrawing tariff oversight or, on the contrary, rendering the service unavailable in the market.
22. Third, for efficiency, carriers should be permitted to file to consolidate their own similar or related services into the proceeding before reaching the intervention stage. Doing so would marshal broader evidence, reduce duplication, and better assist interveners in assessing market conditions.
23. Making forbearance as procedurally accessible as withdrawal, while maintaining undue preference oversight, would not complicate the Commission's work. It would clarify it. Carriers would gain predictability. Customers, and the public, would retain safeguards. Any stakeholder could argue that a service's significance warrants in-depth review rather than a service status change proceeding. In this way the Commission's processes would align with Parliament's direction and a broader market focus.

Related documents

- *Bell Canada – Withdrawal of Audio-conferencing feature of Hosted Internet Protocol Voice service*, Telecom Order CRTC 2026-10, 15 January 2026
- *Bell Canada – Application requesting forbearance from the regulation of Digital Exchange Access Service*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2025-310, 20 November 2025
- *TELUS Communications Inc. – Withdrawal of Internet Voice Access Service*, Telecom Order CRTC 2025-228, 5 September 2025
- *Bell Canada – Tariff Notice 7697 – Withdrawal of PhoneCare service*, Telecom Order CRTC 2024-269, 4 November 2024
- *Approval processes for tariff applications and intercarrier agreements*, Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2010-455-1, 19 February 2016

- *Mandatory customer contract renewal notification and requirements for service destandardization/withdrawal*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2008-22, 6 March 2008
- *New procedures for disposition of applications dealing with the destandardization and/or withdrawal of tariffed services*, Telecom Circular CRTC 2005-7, 30 May 2005