



Telecom Order CRTC 2021-156

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Ottawa, 4 May 2021

Public record: Tariff Notice 554

TELUS Communications Inc. – Withdrawal of Caller Reveal Service

The Commission **approves** TCI's application to withdraw its Caller Reveal Service, effective **18 May 2021**.

Introduction

1. The Commission received an application from TELUS Communications Inc. (TCI), dated 18 September 2020, in which TCI proposed revisions to item 300 of its General Tariff to withdraw its Caller Reveal Service (Caller Reveal) given that the technology that supports it, Advanced Intelligent Network (AIN), is an aging platform.
2. Caller Reveal enables a Call Display¹ customer to better identify incoming calls for which the number is marked "Private," "Unknown," or "Out of Area" by asking the callers to unblock their line or enter a telephone number for display.
3. TCI submitted that Caller Reveal is currently provisioned in all of its forborne and regulated exchanges in Alberta and British Columbia. Furthermore, TCI submitted there are approximately 16,000 Caller Reveal subscribers in regulated exchanges within Alberta and British Columbia, and that the customer base for Caller Reveal has continued to decline year over year.
4. TCI sent a notice to all Caller Reveal customers to inform them of its proposal to withdraw Caller Reveal and to provide information on how to submit comments to the Commission. TCI included a copy of the notice with its application.
5. TCI requested an effective date of 14 calendar days after the Commission issues its decision on the company's application to give it time to prepare for implementation.
6. The Commission received interventions from customers in opposition to TCI's application.

¹ Call Display is a calling service that enables subscribers to view the name and/or telephone number of incoming calls and is provided over a different platform than Caller Reveal.

Should the Commission approve TCI's application to withdraw Caller Reveal?

Positions of parties

7. TCI submitted that there are other calling features with similar functionalities available at equal or lower prices that can be used as substitutes, including the following:
 - Call Control, which can effectively block all robocalls² by intercepting incoming calls and challenging callers to respond to a voice prompt by entering a random digit. The basic option of Call Control (Basic Call Control) also enables subscribers to create an accepted caller list and a blocked caller list and save up to 25 numbers on each list.
 - Call Display with private call blocking, marketed as Anonymous Call Block. Call Display customers who do not subscribe to Caller Reveal have the ability to block calls when the number is marked "Private."
8. TCI submitted that Basic Call Control is available to all affected customers, while Anonymous Call Block is available to all affected customers in British Columbia and Edmonton, Alberta. Further, TCI submitted that these services are available at no additional charge to all affected customers.
9. With respect to the interventions, TCI grouped the concerns raised into the following four categories:
 - Customers who confused Caller Reveal with Call Display
 - Customers who are concerned about Call Control as a substitute
 - Customers who are concerned about the cost or availability of substitute services
 - Customers who did not provide specific rationale or whose concern was unclear

Customers who confused Caller Reveal with Call Display

10. In total, 51% of customers who submitted interventions mistakenly interpreted TCI's application as a request to withdraw Call Display. The removal of Caller Reveal will not impact Call Display in any way given that customers can continue to screen calls using Call Display.

² "Robocall" is the term sometimes used to describe calls made using Automatic Dialing-Announcing Devices, which is any automatic equipment incorporating the capability of storing or producing telecommunications numbers, used alone or in conjunction with other equipment, to convey a pre-recorded or synthesized voice message to a telecommunications number.

Customers who are concerned about Call Control as a substitute

11. Some customers viewed Caller Reveal as their main protection against spammers and unwanted calls and had concerns about the effectiveness and functionalities of Call Control as a substitute service, including missing calls from private numbers. Others were of the view that a caller list of 25 numbers is insufficient.
12. TCI submitted that given the prevalence of illegitimate caller identification (ID) spoofing³ in recent years, most nuisance calls today appear with number display and are not displayed as “Private” or “Unknown.” Several customers indicated that they receive many unwanted calls as a result. TCI added that Call Control is a more effective call-filtering feature and was developed based on the list of best practices for opt-in call-filtering services established by the Commission in Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-442.

Customers who are concerned about the cost or availability of substitute services

13. Other customers expressed concern about a potential increase to their monthly phone bills upon switching to the substitute. TCI noted that both Basic Call Control and Anonymous Call Block are offered free of charge. Moreover, TCI submitted that some customers with Caller Reveal are currently paying a monthly charge for the feature, and that those customers would see a price reduction after switching to the substitutes.
14. Regarding the availability of Anonymous Call Block, TCI submitted that the feature has always been offered to customers in British Columbia and Edmonton only.

Customers who did not provide specific rationale or whose concern was unclear

15. A number of customers provided their objection to the withdrawal of Caller Reveal but did not include specific rationale in their comments. As a result, TCI was unable to determine if the customers’ concerns were for the withdrawal of Caller Reveal.

Commission’s analysis and determinations

16. TCI proposed that Caller Reveal, which is an optional feature and discretionary, be withdrawn because the technology platform that supports it is at the end of its product lifecycle and is obsolete.
17. However, customers in territories where Caller Reveal is available will continue to have the ability to block calls marked “Private” or “Unknown” with other calling

³ A spoofed number can appear as a string of digits, such as 000-000-0000, a random number, or the number of a company, person, or government entity. Illegitimate caller ID spoofing may include calls that (i) purport to originate from telephone numbers that match the telephone number of the person being called; (ii) are spoofed with a number that is local to the person being called, in the case of an incoming long distance call; or (iii) do not conform to the North American Numbering Plan (i.e. are non-dialable telephone numbers [e.g. 000-000-0000]).

services, even though these type of calls no longer appear to be a significant source of spam calls due to an increased reliance on caller ID spoofing.

18. TCI has identified substitutes to which customers can migrate, including Call Control and Anonymous Call Block.
19. Regarding Call Control as a substitute, Call Control was mandated by the Commission in Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Regulatory Policy 2016-442 given that technical solutions available to Canadians to protect themselves from unwanted, unsolicited, and illegitimate telecommunications were not sufficient. The Commission notes that several interveners submitted that they receive unwanted calls.
20. Given that Call Control will provide far more capability to manage nuisance calls, the Commission considers that Call Control will provide more protection to affected customers than Caller Reveal is able to provide.
21. While Anonymous Call Block is a less effective substitute than Call Control for customers who wish to block nuisance and spoofed calls, it will continue to provide customers with the ability to block certain types of calls if they wish to do so. Although Anonymous Call Block is available only to customers in certain territories served by TCI, other Caller Reveal customers who wish to continue to block nuisance and spoofed calls in the future may do so by using Call Display to screen calls and send them to their voice mail.
22. The Commission further considers that the switch to Call Control or Anonymous Call Block will not adversely impact affected customers.
23. Regarding comments on the cost of substitute services, the Commission notes that TCI indicated that both Basic Call Control and Anonymous Call Block will be offered free of charge.
24. The Commission notes that customers must contact TCI to have Basic Call Control or Anonymous Call Block added to their account, which may pose a burden for some subscribers. The Commission therefore encourages TCI to proactively work with affected customers in regulated exchanges to ensure a smooth transition.
25. TCI's application meets the requirements set out in Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-455-1, in which the Commission set out its procedures for dealing with applications to destandardize and/or withdraw tariffed services.⁴ In particular, TCI

⁴ These procedures, which have been approved in various decisions and summarized in Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-455-1, were developed to comply with the directives set out in *Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on Implementing the Canadian Telecommunications Policy Objectives*, SOR/2006-355, 14 December 2006 (the 2006 Policy Direction). In particular, in relation to destandardization/withdrawal, the bulletin summarizes the Commission's determinations set out in Telecom Decision 2008-22 and is incorporated by reference in section 59 of the *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure*.

provided a description of the service affected by the proposed withdrawal, the proposed date and rationale for the withdrawal, and the number of customers affected. In addition, the company has provided a notice to each customer affected by its application to withdraw these particular services.

26. In light of all the above, the Commission considers that TCI's proposal to withdraw Caller Reveal is reasonable and consistent with existing regulations. The Commission therefore **approves** TCI's application, effective **18 May 2021**.

Policy Directions

27. The 2019 Policy Direction⁵ states that the Commission should consider how its decisions can promote competition, affordability, consumer interests, and innovation.
28. The Commission has reviewed TCI's application in light of the 2019 Policy Direction and has considered its aspects to the extent necessary, using measures that are efficient and proportionate to their purpose. The Commission considers that its approval of the application is compliant with the 2019 Policy Direction, since it promotes (i) consumer interests, by allowing for the withdrawal of an outdated and obsolete service while ensuring that customers have an opportunity to have their views heard before the withdrawal; and (ii) innovation, by ensuring that consumers have access to innovative high-quality telecommunications services as a substitute for the withdrawn service.
29. Further, in compliance with subparagraph 1(b)(i) of the 2006 Policy Direction, approval of TCI's application advances the policy objective set out in paragraph 7(f) of the *Telecommunications Act* given that the platform upon which Caller Reveal is based is technologically obsolete, and that the substitute services proposed will offer significantly enhanced protection regarding the screening of nuisance and illegitimate calls.⁶

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Empowering Canadians to protect themselves from unwanted unsolicited and illegitimate telecommunications*, Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2016-442, 7 November 2016

⁵ *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

⁶ 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.

- *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