



Telecom Order CRTC 2025-240

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Gatineau, 12 September 2025

Public record: Tariff Notice 589

Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership – Implementation of thousand-block pooling

Summary

The Commission received an application from Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership (Bell Aliant) proposing to amend the wording in Item 1270 of its Nova Scotia General Tariff to accommodate the Commission's determinations concerning thousand-block pooling in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-26.

The wording change proposed ensures that a carrier's request for numbers will only be provided where forecasts warrant. This change implements the Commission's determinations and would help to make number assignment more efficient, to ensure that the industry does not run out of numbers. Accordingly, the Commission approves Bell Aliant's application.

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

Application

1. On 21 May 2025, the Commission received an application from Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership (Bell Aliant) proposing changes to its Nova Scotia General Tariff, Item 1270 – Wireless Access Service, to accommodate the Commission's determinations regarding thousand-block pooling in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-26.
2. Bell Aliant noted that in paragraphs 79 and 86 of Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-26, the Commission directed local exchange carriers to update their tariffs at least four months prior to thousand-block pooling implementation, which is scheduled for 6 October 2025. Consequently, Bell Aliant proposed wording changes to reflect that an entire Central Office Code, or NXX, will only be provided where demand forecasts warrant.
3. Bell Aliant requested an effective date of 6 October 2025.
4. The Commission did not receive any interventions regarding this application.

Commission's analysis

5. On 19 January 2022, a Commission [letter](#) was sent to the Chair of the Canadian Steering Committee on Numbering (CSCN), a working group of the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee. The letter noted that numbering resources in Canada appear to be diminishing at a rate that exceeds the expected life span for area codes, and requested that the CSCN examine the issue. The CSCN was also asked to submit a report on this topic to the Commission.
6. Because there is a finite number of telephone numbers available, the CSCN identified ways to assign smaller number blocks in its [report](#) to slow the exhaustion of Numbering Plan Areas (NPAs).¹ Subsequently, in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-26, the Commission determined that thousand-block pooling should be implemented in Canada to address this issue. The Commission considers that Bell Aliant's proposed tariff revisions appropriately reflect the Commission's relevant determinations.
7. The Commission therefore considers that Bell Aliant's proposal to amend the wording in Item 1270 of its Nova Scotia General Tariff is reasonable and complies with the relevant regulatory policy.

Conclusion

8. In light of all of the above, the Commission approves, by majority decision, Bell Aliant'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 document

- *Implementing thousand-block pooling*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2024-26, 5 February 2024

¹ The Commission helps administer telephone numbers and other numbering resources pursuant to section 46.1 of the *Telecommunications Act*, working with other stakeholders in Canada and internationally within the North American Numbering Plan (NANP). Under the NANP, Canada is assigned a certain number of NPAs, also known as area codes. Each NPA includes 791 central office (CO) codes (the three digits following the area code in a ten-digit number), which are assigned to Canadian carriers by the Canadian Numbering Administrator (CNA). Each CO code in turn includes 10,000 telephone numbers, which carriers use to serve their customers. NPAs, CO codes, and telephone numbers can be deemed geographic or non-geographic, depending on whether they are associated with a specific region. Once all CO codes in a specific NPA have been assigned to carriers, a new NPA is implemented to provide relief. Long-standing policies and processes that benefit local and long-distance competition have led to number assignment rules that do not always favour number preservation.

Dissenting opinion of Commissioner Bram Abramson

1. Before Thousand-Block Pooling (TBP), “when a carrier extend[ed] services to a new area, it [was] assigned an entire CO [central office] code composed of 10,000 geographic numbers without regard to population or whether the carrier needs that many numbers. This [led] to many numbers remaining unused.”¹
2. Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership (Bell Aliant)’s Nova Scotia General Tariff (NS GT)’s Wireless Access Service was in line with this approach. It promised wireless carriers that blocks of seven-digit telephone numbers would be:

Provided in the Halifax exchange as a dedicated NXX. (10,000 telephone numbers).²

3. But that is now the approach of a different era. TBP heralds a new one. Core to its approach is that carriers receive blocks of 1,000 telephone numbers, not 10,000. To wit: “only the requested and justified quantity of blocks of 1,000 numbers are to be allocated for the requesting carrier’s actual use, with the remaining numbers being attributed to the number pooling inventory associated with the area.”³
4. One might reasonably expect the NS GT’s Wireless Access Service’s responsive revision, therefore, to update its reference from 10,000 to 1,000. But not so fast. Instead Bell Canada has proposed, and a majority of the Telecommunications Committee accepts,⁴ that the NS GT’s Wireless Access Service be revised to read:

Provided in the Halifax exchange as a dedicated NXX. (10,000 telephone numbers), **where forecasts warrant**.⁵

5. “Where forecasts warrant” does capture the requirement that “only the requested and justified quantity of ... numbers are to be allocated”. But the proposed revision clings

¹ Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-26, paragraph 3.

² Bell Aliant, Nova Scotia General Tariff CRTC 10001, Item 1270 (“Wireless Access Service”), issued 30 May 2025.

³ Telecom Regulatory Policy 2024-26, paragraph 29.

⁴ On behalf of the Commission: *Telecommunications Committee*, By-Law No. 10, paragraph (e) (“Any act or thing done by the Telecommunications Committee shall be deemed to be an act or thing done by the members”), adopted pursuant to *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-22 (CRTC Act), subsection 12(3)—as distinguished from a panel struck under subsection 6(2) of the CRTC Act: *Shoan v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2016 FCA 261, para 6.

⁵ Bell Aliant, Application, Tariff Notice 589. Emphasis added to highlight proposed changes.

just as tightly to “10,000 telephone numbers”—exactly the default TBP was designed to replace.

6. No one, it is true, has ever accused Canadian telecommunications tariffs of excessive clarity or sparkle. Still, it is surely not too much to ask that when a clear concept is presented and tariffs are to be revised to translate it, the revision not leave out the very core of that concept.
7. Rather than send the proposed language back for revisions, as we ought to have done, the Telecommunications Committee’s majority opinion contorts itself into reading the revised language as sufficient. After all, if forecasts warranted ten 1,000-number blocks, that would still be 10,000 telephone numbers—wouldn’t it?
8. That seems too cute by half in a setting where cuteness, with all due respect to my colleagues, is no virtue.
9. The minutiae of a provincial tariff’s wording on a technical numbering matter are not, I grant, likely to quicken the regulatory pulse. But there is a reason tariff language requires our approval. Without oversight, the incentive to obscure or water down tariff language will merge all too readily with the opportunity to do so.
10. To rubber-stamp language that obscures the core concepts directed, or to contort our reasoning to accommodate it, is poor regulatory craft. So, too, here. Letting tariff language slide invites natural curiosity about what else is allowed to slide, too. It suggests that our oversight wanes outside the spotlight. It invites applicants, over time, to behave as though incentive and opportunity had already merged.