



Telecom Decision CRTC 2025-242

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Reference: Part 1 application posted on 21 May 2025

Gatineau, 17 September 2025

Public record: 8640-B2-202502468

Bell Canada – Application for forbearance from the regulation of residential local exchange services in four exchanges in Atlantic Canada

Summary

The Commission approves Bell Canada’s application for forbearance from the regulation of residential local exchange services in St. Anthony and Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland and Labrador, Inverness, Nova Scotia, and Tignish, Prince Edward Island.

Application

1. On 7 May 2025, the Commission received an application from Bell Canada requesting forbearance from the regulation of residential local exchange services¹ in four exchanges in Atlantic Canada: St. Anthony and Port Aux Basques, Newfoundland and Labrador (NL); Inverness, Nova Scotia (NS); and Tignish, Prince Edward Island (PEI). Bell Canada, through its Bell Aliant division, is the incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC) in these operating territories.
2. Pursuant to the Commission’s requirements in Telecom Decision 2006-15 and Telecom Regulatory Policy 2020-40, Bell Canada provided evidence to support its forbearance request, including competitor presence data and a draft customer communications plan for the Commission’s review. Bell Canada also submitted the following evidence to demonstrate that the four exchanges meet the competitor presence test:
 - serviceability data for facilities-based wireline competitors at the postal code level;
 - long-term evolution (LTE) wireless coverage maps; and

¹ In this decision, “residential local exchange services” refers to local exchange services used by residential customers to access the public switched telephone network and any associated service charges, features, and ancillary services.

- data from July 2024 produced by Mediastats Inc. (Mediastats), a third-party telecommunications data aggregator that provides residential serviceability analyses.
3. Bell Canada filed a customer communications plan indicating that it would notify affected customers by 11 April 2025. The notices sent by Bell Canada explained the implications of forbearance, confirmed service continuity under the Unregulated Terms of Service defined in Telecom Decision 2007-27, and provided contact information for the Commission, the Commission for Complaints for Telecommunications Services (CCTS),² the Competition Bureau, the Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA), and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC).
 4. The Commission received an intervention from TELUS Communications Inc. (TELUS), which confirmed Bell Canada's evidence regarding TELUS's wireless presence in the exchanges in question.

Commission's analysis

5. The Commission assessed Bell Canada's application on the basis of the local forbearance test set out in Telecom Decision 2006-15 and modified in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2020-40. This test requires the Commission to consider service definition and product and geographic markets, evidence of a competitive market, the adequacy and transparency of any associated customer communications plan, and the application's procedural compliance and public record.

Service definition and product and geographic markets

6. Bell Canada is seeking forbearance from the regulation of four tariffed residential local exchanges and their services. A list of these services is set out in the appendix to this decision. In Telecom Decision 2006-15, the Commission found that all of these services are eligible to be considered for forbearance.
7. Bell Canada defined the product market as residential local exchange services and the geographic market as each individual exchange. Based on the precedents in Telecom Decisions 2017-51 and 2018-418, the Commission considers that Bell Canada's product and geographic market definitions are reasonable.

Evidence of a competitive market

8. Bell Canada submitted that each of the four exchanges is served by at least one facilities-based wireline competitor and one or more facilities-based wireless competitors. Furthermore, Bell Canada noted that in each exchange, these competitors can serve at least 75% of residential households. In the case of the exchange of Port Aux Basques, NL, Bell Canada explained that the 75% coverage

² The CCTS is an independent body that assists Canadians who have been unable to resolve disputes regarding forborne telecommunications services with their telecommunications service providers.

threshold was reached by adding the footprints of two different cable companies, both of which offer home phone services.

9. In each of the four exchanges for which forbearance is sought, the facilities-based competitors are the following:

Exchange	Wireline competitor	Wireless competitor
St. Anthony, NL	Bragg Communications Inc., carrying on business as Eastlink (Eastlink)	TELUS
Port Aux Basques, NL	Eastlink	TELUS and Rogers Communications Canada Inc.
Inverness, NS	Eastlink	TELUS
Tignish, PEI	Eastlink	TELUS

10. The Commission reviewed the postal code-level data, wireless LTE overlays, and Mediastats’s analysis and found the evidence submitted by Bell Canada to be methodologically sound and consistent with evidence deemed adequate in previous forbearance decisions such as Telecom Decisions 2017-51 and 2018-418. In particular, the data is presented in a verifiable format and Bell Canada’s assumptions about household coverage appear conservative and reasonable.
11. The Commission considers that the evidence submitted by Bell Canada for all four exchanges successfully passes the competitor presence test. The Commission notes that the combination of wireline, and that wireless evidence ensures that competitor presence can be comprehensively assessed.

Customer communications plan and transparency

12. The Commission reviewed Bell Canada’s customer communications plan and found it to be compliant with Commission-approved procedures for notifying customers. The plan ensures that customers receive timely, clear, and actionable information about the impact of forbearance. Bell Canada’s customer communications plan also supports continuity of service and regulatory transparency.
13. The Commission considers the references to the Unregulated Terms of Service and the inclusion of multiple complaint and oversight bodies – namely the Commission, the CCTS, the Competition Bureau, the OCA, and the OPC – to be key elements that will help ensure customer protection during the transition.

Procedural compliance and public record

14. The application was filed, published, and processed in accordance with the Commission's procedural requirements. No concerns or objections were raised by residents, other competitors, or stakeholders.

Conclusion

15. The Commission is satisfied that Bell Canada's application meets the criteria established in Telecom Decision 2006-15 and Telecom Regulatory Policy 2020-40. Additionally, the Commission considers that granting forbearance in the four exchanges identified by Bell Canada supports the policy objectives set out in paragraphs 7(c) and (f) of the *Telecommunications Act*.³
16. The Commission therefore approves Bell Canada's application for forbearance from the regulation of residential local exchange services in the four exchanges in this application: St. Anthony and Port Aux Basques, NL, Inverness, NS, and Tignish, PEI.
17. Approval of Bell Canada's application for forbearance is consistent with the 2023 Policy Direction,⁴ which instructs the Commission to encourage competition, ensure affordable and high-quality telecommunications services, and reduce regulatory barriers.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Review of the price cap and local forbearance regimes*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2020-40, 4 February 2020
- *Bell Canada – Application for forbearance from the regulation of residential local exchange services*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2018-418, 6 November 2018
- *Bell Canada – Application for forbearance from the regulation of residential local exchange services*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2017-51, 24 February 2017
- *Price cap framework for large incumbent local exchange carriers*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2007-27, 30 April 2007
- *Forbearance from the regulation of retail local exchange services*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2006-15, 6 April 2006, as amended by Order in Council P.C. 2007-532, 4 April 2007

³ 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.

⁴ *Order Issuing a Direction to the CRTC on a Renewed Approach to Telecommunications Policy*, SOR/2023-23, 10 February 2023.

Appendix to Telecom Decision CRTC 2025-242

Local exchange services eligible for forbearance from regulation in this decision (for residential customers only)

Tariff	Item	List of services
21491	125.3	Extra Listings
21491	125.4	Non-Listed, Non-Published Service
21491	125.5	Contract Period for Chargeable Extra Listings
21491	125.6	Directories and Listings – Rates and Charges
21491	135	Enhanced Employee Discount Plan
21491	201	Extended Area Service (EAS)
21491	202	Community Calling Plan (CCP)
21491	205.1	Residence Single Line Access Service
21491	205.3	Residence Multi-line Access Service
21491	205.5	Residence Party Line Access Service
21491	257	Express Service
21491	280	Fibre to the Home (FTTH)
21491	300	Residence Single-Line Access Bundles
21491	300.1	Enhanced Consumer Access
21491	300.2	Atlantic Access Bundle
21491	300.3	Canada/U.S. Access Bundle
21491	304	Enhanced Local Calling (Calling Features)
21491	312	900 Call Denial/Blocking Service
21491	348	Hospital Patient Telephone Service