



Telecom Order CRTC 2026-10

PDF version

Gatineau, 15 January 2026

Public record: Tariff Notice 989

Bell Canada – Withdrawal of Audio-conferencing feature of Hosted Internet Protocol Voice service

Summary

The Commission received an application from Bell Canada proposing to withdraw the Audio-conferencing feature of its Hosted Internet Protocol Voice service under Item 517 of its National Services Tariff.

The equipment used to support the Audio-conferencing feature has reached its end of life with the vendor and cannot be replaced, and customer impact is minimal. Accordingly, the Commission approves Bell Canada's application.

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

Application

1. On 7 July 2025, the Commission received an application from Bell Canada proposing to withdraw the Audio-conferencing feature of its Hosted Internet Protocol (IP) Voice service under Item 517 of its National Services Tariff.
2. The feature is offered in Bell Canada's incumbent operating territory in Ontario and Quebec and provides a personal audio-conference bridge for up to 25 participants that does not require a reservation.
3. Bell Canada submitted that the equipment used to support the Audio-conferencing feature has reached its end of life with the vendor and will no longer be supported or functional after 30 September 2025.
4. Bell Canada provided a copy of the notice that it sent to all affected customers to let them know about its application to withdraw the Audio-conferencing feature. It informed customers that, if the withdrawal were approved, the feature would be discontinued and identified the existing six-way calling feature of its Hosted IP Voice service as an alternative.
5. Bell Canada requested an effective date of 30 September 2025.
6. The Commission did not receive any interventions regarding the application.

Commission's analysis

7. 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Bulletin 2010-455-1, Bell Canada provided the Commission with (i) a description of the service proposed to be withdrawn, (ii) the proposed withdrawal date, (iii) the rationale for the withdrawal, (iv) the number of customers affected, and (v) a copy of the notice to affected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.
8. In response to a Commission staff request for information, Bell Canada confirmed that the platform over which the Hosted IP Voice service is provided has a single source supplier, and that it has reached end of life with the manufacturer. Bell Canada also confirmed that replacements from the same manufacturer are not available within the tariffed Hosted IP Voice service and that it is not possible to substitute different equipment into the platform from other vendors.
9. In its response, Bell Canada also noted that, in addition to the existing six-way calling feature, customers have a wide variety of options for calls with larger numbers of participants, many of which are free or low cost.
10. The Commission acknowledges that the proposed change is being made because the equipment supporting the Audio-conferencing feature is at the end of its lifespan and cannot be replaced, and that customer impact is minimal. Accordingly, the Commission considers that Bell Canada's request is reasonable.
11. Approval of this application supports the Commission's longstanding practice of removing obsolete tariffed services where customer impact is negligible and advances the policy objectives set out in paragraphs 7(c) and (f)¹ of the *Telecommunications Act*.

Conclusion

12. In light of all of the above, the Commission approves, by majority decision, Bell Canada's application.
13. 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

¹ 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.

Related documents

- *Bell Aliant Regional Communications, Limited Partnership – Hospital Patient Telephone Service – Withdrawal and replacement with alternative services*, Telecom Order CRTC 2025-235, 10 September 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

Dissenting opinion of Commissioner Bram Abramson

1. I dissent because, in my view, this decision goes in the wrong direction. We should be forbearing from regulating audio-conferencing, not fossilizing its continued regulation by simply withdrawing tariff elements that relate to it.
2. In so doing I dissent for what has become a familiar, if structurally troubling, error—less so on the service at issue, which is minor, than for the statutory discipline that binds us. That statutory error is as follows. In my respectful view, the majority bypasses a mandatory obligation when it substitutes a Commission-devised process (withdrawal) for the one Parliament enacted (forbearance). I do not think we have the authority to do that. Nor, even if we did, would it be the better approach. Withdrawal leaves behind confusion. Forbearance clears the ground. Our framework should make room for the latter.
3. Administrative law is clear that, where a statute prescribes an express path, the Commission may not rely on more general powers to chart an alternative route around it.¹
4. The *Telecommunications Act* (the Act) is clear that, where a service is subject to sufficient competition to protect the interests of users, the Commission shall forbear from exercising duties and powers in relation to that service.²
5. The evidentiary record is clear that, whether or not many-simultaneous-call audioconferencing is part of Bell Canada’s tariffed Hosted Internet Protocol (IP) Voice service using “IP/MPLS [multiprotocol label switching] access to carry voice traffic, customer premise elements to manage voice quality and an application server to support the features”,³ Bell Canada considers many competing services to be available:

[C]ustomers have a wide variety of options for calls with larger numbers of participants, many of which are free or low cost. From Bell, customers can elect to use over-the-top (OTT) applications such as Webex, which has both audio and video dial-in options, that can integrate with the Hosted IP service. In addition to this OTT option, customers can use one of several commonly-used platforms (for example, Zoom or Microsoft Teams), which have both video and audio dial-in

¹ *Expressio unius est exclusio alterius*, as helpfully reviewed in *Reference re: Section 101 of the Public Utilities Act*, 2017 NLCA 34 (CanLII), paragraph 17: see dissents to Telecom Order 2024-269, at footnote 4 and accompanying text; to Telecom Order 2025-228, at footnote 16 and accompanying text; and to Telecom Order 2025-235, at footnote 6 and accompanying text.

² S.C. 1993, c. 38, subsection 34(2).

³ Bell Canada, National Services Tariff (CRTC 7400), Item 517.1(a) (Hosted IP Voice service—General).

- options. The customer may also subscribe to other OTT access-independent apps that can be used to provide the same functionality as the withdrawn feature.⁴
6. It is one thing for the Commission not to proactively identify services that ought to be forborne. Some have called for a more forward-looking regulatory posture that gathers and acts on research, rather than waiting for motivated parties to start the ball rolling in each case.⁵ But I concede that nothing compels the Commission to follow such advice.
 7. However, it is altogether different when a specific service is raised squarely before us and, what is more, explicit evidence that relates directly to our forbearance responsibility led with it. In these circumstances we are bound not to ignore the combination created by administrative law's clear principles, the statute's plain language, and the applicant's additional submissions. We are obliged to consider forbearance, under sections 48 and 34 of the Act before moving forward with any Commission-invented withdrawal process.
 8. Accordingly, and like in Telecom Orders 2024-269, 2025-228, and 2025-235, I cannot agree with the Telecommunications Committee's majority decision⁶ to plow ahead with withdrawal irrespective of the status of competition for the service at issue. In my respectful view, that course exceeds our statutory authority, and produces poor public policy. Forbearance would have permitted Bell Canada to continue to sell audio-conferencing with the Hosted IP Voice it tariffs into phone-dependent communities. Withdrawal, by contrast, preserves the presumption of market power and, once the tariff is gone, forecloses such sales altogether.
 9. I understand, and respect, the majority's preference to continue to rehearse the steps we choreographed in Telecom Circular 2005-7 and streamlined in Telecom Decision 2008-22. Our prior decisions ought to guide and, all else equal, persuade us. But they are not to be applied mechanically: "[a]s a matter of law ... while the CRTC may refer to and take guidance from its earlier decisions, those decisions cannot dictate its

⁴ CRTC File 8740-B20-202503466 (TN 989), Response to Bell Canada(CRTC)22Jul25-1, 1 August 2025, page 2.

⁵ *Canada's communications future: Time to act*, Report of the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel (J. Yale, chair), 29 January 2020, section 1.3.2.

⁶ 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).

subsequent decisions. The CRTC is not bound by precedent and has a legal obligation not to fetter its discretion.”⁷

10. As I have elsewhere suggested,⁸ a no-less-workable solution is readily at hand. We invented a streamlined destandardization and withdrawal process. We could likewise create a parallel streamlined forbearance process, adding a third prong to what are now two:
 - a) As now, give notice to customers, with instructions on participating.
 - b) But require evidence of competition, in place of encouraging identification of substitutes.
 - c) For efficiency, and to marshal both a greater breadth of interrelated evidence and more compelling proceeding to elicit interventions, permit other carriers to consolidate similar services into the same proceeding before opening things up to interventions.
11. By declining to consider forbearance where the Act requires it and record demands it, the majority substitutes administrative convenience for statutory discipline. That is not what the Act directs. Nor, respectfully, is it what sound public policy demands.

⁷ *Bell Canada v. Canada (Attorney General)*, 2011 FC 1120 (CanLII), paras 88-90.

⁸ Dissenting opinion to Telecom Order 2025-228, paragraph 13.