Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission
Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications canadiennes

Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision CRTC 2026-52

PDF version

References: 2024-43, 2024-43-1

Gatineau, 27 March 2026

Public record: 1011-NOC2024-0043

Mandatory call traceback participation for all providers of voice telecommunications services

Summary

Through its work under the *Telecommunications Act*, the Commission has a role to play to help ensure Canadians have access to safe and reliable telecommunications services. As part of its role, the Commission promotes compliance with the Unsolicited Telecommunications Rules to help prevent Canadians from receiving unwanted calls that do not comply with those rules.

Technology today can be used to make phone calls using fake numbers and showing false information on people's call displays. This practice is commonly known as "spoofing." It is typically used to trick people into sharing personal information to individuals or groups that intend to misuse that information. Spoofing makes it difficult to trace or call back the person or group that made the call.

To help address spoofing, the Commission introduced the call traceback process in 2021, which allows calls to be traced back to the individual or group that made it, even if fake numbers are used. Through a traceback request, Commission staff can ask telecommunications service providers (TSPs) to provide details about the individual or group that was the true source of an unwanted call. This information allows the Commission to take action to help prevent nuisance calls to Canadians. However, since participation in this process was not made mandatory for all TSPs, it can sometimes limit the Commission's ability to investigate those calls.

To address this issue and help better protect Canadians from receiving unwanted calls, the Commission launched a public consultation to gather views on whether all TSPs should be required to participate. The Commission received comments from individuals, public interest groups, and TSPs.

Based on the public record, the Commission is directing all TSPs to participate in the call traceback process once they have received their first traceback request from the Commission, as a condition of offering and providing voice telecommunications services. This requirement comes into effect on **25 June 2026**.

Canada

While this decision will help protect Canadians, the Commission recognizes the importance of minimizing regulatory burden on TSPs.

The Commission therefore finds that it would be more efficient to onboard TSPs and establish the necessary procedures only when they receive their first traceback request. Furthermore, Commission staff will provide assistance with the onboarding of new participants.

To pursue further efficiencies, the Commission requests the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee to explore ways to automate the processing of call traceback requests, and to report their findings to the Commission by **28 September 2026.**

Introduction

1. In Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision 2021-268, the Commission approved the implementation of a process known as call traceback, which helps identify the source of telephone calls that do not comply with the Unsolicited Telecommunications Rules (nuisance calls).

2. The call traceback process is one of the measures the Commission has taken to address nuisance calls. It is used to trace and identify the origin of calls for which the caller ID displayed (i.e., the telephone number) has been altered (known as spoofed calls). With that information, telecommunications service providers (TSPs) and the Commission can take corrective action at, or close to, the source of the call.

3. In Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision 2021-268, the Commission made it voluntary for TSPs to participate in the traceback process. However, the Commission indicated that it might revisit whether participation by all TSPs should be made mandatory after evaluating the success of voluntary participation.

Compliance and Enforcement Notice of Consultation 2024-43

4. In February 2024, the Commission issued Compliance and Enforcement Notice of Consultation 2024-43 (the Notice), inviting interested parties to comment on requiring TSPs that provide voice telecommunications services to participate in the traceback process. The Commission expressed the preliminary view that mandatory participation in the call traceback process is warranted.

5. The Commission received interventions from one individual; Access Communications Co-operative Limited (Access Communications); Amigo Computing Incorporated; Bell Canada; Bragg Communications Inc., carrying on business as Eastlink (Eastlink); Cogeco Communications Inc., on behalf of Cogeco Connexion Inc. (Cogeco); the Independent Telecommunications Providers Association (ITPA); Industry Traceback Group; Iristel Inc. (Iristel); Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), Quebecor Media Inc., on behalf of Freedom Mobile Inc. and Videotron Ltd. (Quebecor); Rogers Communications Canada Inc. (Rogers); Saskatchewan Telecommunications (SaskTel); SSi Micro Ltd., doing business as SSi Canada

(SSi); TBayTel; TekSavvy Solutions Inc. (TekSavvy); and TELUS Communications Inc. (TELUS).

Issues

6. The Commission has identified the following issues to be addressed in this decision:

    - Should the Commission require the implementation of the call traceback process as a condition of offering and providing voice telecommunications services?

    - If so, when should TSPs be onboarded to the call traceback process?

7. The Notice also sought comments on various operational issues, which are outlined later in this decision.

Should the Commission require the implementation of the call traceback process as a condition of offering and providing voice telecommunications services?

Positions of parties

8. Iristel, Quebecor, SaskTel, and TekSavvy were in favour of requiring TSPs to participate in the call traceback process as a condition of offering and providing voice telecommunications services. They emphasized the need for universal participation to enhance the effectiveness of the traceback process.

9. Bell Canada, Rogers, and TELUS also supported such a requirement, but urged the Commission to first ensure that data obtained through the call traceback process is used for its intended purpose, namely, investigating nuisance calls and taking corrective action at, or near, their source.

10. Cogeco, Eastlink, the ITPA, SSi, and TBayTel opposed the mandate. They submitted that the voluntary model sufficiently addresses nuisance calls. They also submitted that mandatory participation would be unnecessary and inefficient, particularly for TSPs with low call volumes. They advocated for improving the current system instead.

11. Cogeco, PIAC, and SSi raised concerns about the burden of such a mandate on smaller TSPs. SSi proposed to either exclude smaller TSPs from mandatory participation in the traceback process or provide funding to assist them with traceback requests. Bell Canada and Rogers opposed that proposal.

12. Eastlink, Rogers, and TELUS suggested that if participation in the traceback process is mandated, TSPs should receive immunity from penalties when they are acting in good faith but are unable to fully comply due to unforeseen circumstances.

Commission's analysis

13. The Commission notes that, before the call traceback process was implemented, a large number of cases involving spoofed telephone numbers could not be pursued because the source of the call (i.e., an individual or group) could not be identified. The traceback process has made the Commission more effective in promoting compliance with the Unsolicited Telecommunications Rules and investigating potential violations.

14. Making participation in the traceback process mandatory would help identify the source of nuisance calls that have been delivered by TSPs that do not currently participate in the process, and would prevent a TSP from ignoring traceback requests when a response is needed for an investigation.

15. The Commission considers that excluding specific types of TSPs could leave a loophole for nuisance calls to enter Canada through TSPs excluded from the traceback process. As Quebecor noted, involvement from all TSPs would close loopholes in the telecommunications system that could be exploited by bad actors. As such, the Commission emphasizes the need for access to traceback information from all TSPs, regardless of size. Requiring all TSPs that provide voice telecommunications services to participate in the traceback process would enable Commission staff to respond to complaints from customers of any TSP.

16. Regarding the workload required to process traceback requests, the Commission finds that it is manageable. A traceback request involves locating the call record, completing a form, and sending the form via email. Even small TSPs have reported no specific issues with this process, since they handle few calls in Canada, leading to few traceback requests. Considering that the work required depends on network size and call volume, most small TSPs will have less work than large TSPs. Accordingly, the Commission does not find the workload to process traceback requests excessive and considers that the benefits of timely access to information for investigating nuisance calls outweigh the potential burden on TSPs.

17. As for the request for immunity protection for TSPs that act in good faith, the Commission notes that the traceback process provides flexibility regarding response times. Participating TSPs that act in good faith would not need to be concerned about penalties. The Commission would only consider penalties after following due process, and if a TSP showed a repeated failure to respond appropriately to traceback requests.

18. In light of the above, the Commission considers that requiring all TSPs to implement the call traceback process as a condition for providing voice telecommunications services is appropriate.

When should TSPs be onboarded to the call traceback process?

19. Onboarding requires TSPs to establish procedures for responding to traceback requests, including providing contact emails, understanding the traceback process and related forms, and in-house preparations for responding to traceback requests.

20. Bell Canada has played an active role in onboarding TSPs after they receive their first traceback request.

Positions of parties

21. Quebecor and TBayTel highlighted that onboarding prior to receiving an initial traceback request would allow TSPs to prepare to handle requests efficiently.

22. However, Bell Canada, Rogers, and TELUS, supported by PIAC, did not agree with the idea of having all TSPs onboarded immediately. Bell Canada indicated that the existing onboarding process would not be able to accommodate mandatory onboarding of the several thousand TSPs at the same time. More specifically, Bell Canada indicated that it would not be able to continue its active involvement in the onboarding process were it required to onboard so many TSPs.

23. Rogers and TELUS proposed that TSPs be onboarded when they receive their first traceback request.

24. Bell Canada suggested a dual onboarding process: larger TSPs would join within a prescribed period and smaller TSPs would join using a phased approach, which would be triggered when they received their first traceback request. The ITPA and Rogers supported this approach.

25. Bell Canada also indicated that, should the Commission decide to require onboarding of all TSPs at once, there would be a need to (i) identify which organization would be responsible for performing all onboarding duties, and (ii) develop streamlined procedures and policies in order to conduct onboarding in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

Commission's analysis

26. Making participation in the traceback process mandatory may create additional work for TSPs in (i) onboarding, and (ii) responding to traceback requests. Mandatory participation may also impact Bell Canada in particular, given the role it currently plays in supporting TSPs when they receive their first traceback request.

27. While the Commission considers the onboarding process to be a relatively straightforward, one-time process that, as Bell Canada suggested, can be further reviewed, it also acknowledges that onboarding TSPs before they receive their first traceback request may be inefficient, because all TSPs would have to prepare to handle requests that they may never receive or only receive later.

28. The Commission therefore finds that it would be more efficient to onboard TSPs only when they receive their first traceback request.

29. Accordingly, the Commission considers that all TSPs should only be required to establish procedures to respond to traceback requests once they have received their first request.

30. To minimize the impact that onboarding may have on Bell Canada, Commission staff will provide assistance with the onboarding process to new participants, as well as administrative support when new participants are contacted with their first traceback request.

Operational issues

Forwarding traceback requests to foreign providers

Positions of parties

31. Access Communications, Bell Canada, Iristel, Quebecor, Rogers, SaskTel, TBayTel, and TekSavvy supported the forwarding of traceback requests to foreign providers for calls originating or transiting outside of Canada.

32. Eastlink, the ITPA, and TELUS, however, questioned whether that would be effective. They noted that foreign providers are not subject to Canadian regulations, and thus there is a low likelihood of co-operation.

Commission's analysis

33. The Commission considers that, because of the low probability of timely responses, it would not be efficient to require TSPs to forward traceback requests to foreign providers, and that such a requirement would impose an undue burden on TSPs.

34. If a foreign traceback request is deemed necessary, the Commission can issue the request to the relevant foreign entity.

Providing the name of the upstream provider for traceback requests regardless of the type of TSP

Positions of parties

35. There was a consensus among interveners that, if a TSP can identify the upstream TSP,[1] it must provide the name of that TSP in response to a traceback request.

Commission's analysis

36. Given the consensus, the Commission considers that, when responding to a traceback request, a TSP must provide the name of the upstream TSP, regardless of the type of TSP.

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[1] When a TSP receives a traceback request regarding a call that did not originate from one of its own subscribers, that TSP must identify the TSP from which they received the call. In these cases, the other TSP is referred to as the "upstream TSP" or "upstream provider".

Call data retention period

Positions of parties

37. Bell Canada, Cogeco, Iristel, Rogers, TBayTel, and TELUS supported retaining call data for 10 calendar days, as established in Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision 2021-268. TELUS added that the Commission should consider reducing the retention period if most traceback requests are completed in less than 10 days.

38. Iristel and Quebecor were against mandating a data retention period, citing potential limitations in data storage capacity.

Commission's analysis

39. Given the agreement of most interveners, the Commission considers it appropriate for TSPs to maintain call data for a minimum of 10 calendar days and will maintain the current requirement to do so.

Response time for traceback requests

Positions of parties

40. Access Communications, Bell Canada, Iristel, Quebecor, Rogers, TBayTel, TekSavvy, and TELUS supported maintaining the current requirement for a TSP to respond to a traceback request within two business days, as established in Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision 2021-268.

41. Rogers and TELUS added that TSPs should be given some flexibility, since a response could be delayed by lost records, network disruptions, resource constraints, or other issues.

Commission's analysis

42. Given the agreement of most interveners, the Commission considers it would be appropriate to maintain the current requirement to respond to a traceback request within two business days, subject to the provision of reasonable justification by a TSP when it is unable to meet this timeline.

Weekly limit of traceback requests

Positions of parties

43. Access Communications, Bell Canada, Quebecor, Rogers, SaskTel, and TELUS supported maintaining the weekly limit of 10 traceback requests for each TSP and 40 requests per week for the entire industry, as established in Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision 2021-268.

Commission's analysis

44. The existing weekly limits for traceback requests were set to protect larger TSPs from a burdensome number of requests, especially incumbent local exchange providers, which handle high call volumes and multiple traceback requests.

45. Thus far, however, no TSP has received more than five traceback requests in a week, even among large TSPs, and small TSPs that currently participate receive very few traceback requests and have not found the current limits burdensome.

46. The Commission therefore considers that it would be appropriate to maintain the current weekly limits for traceback requests. The Commission clarifies that limits apply for each legal entity individually, not for groups of companies.

Inclusion of STIR/SHAKEN data in the traceback form

Positions of parties

47. Most interveners supported the addition of STIR/SHAKEN[2] information to traceback request forms. TELUS indicated that this would be beneficial and could be done easily.

48. Iristel opposed the proposal. It noted the low volume of STIR/SHAKEN data and mentioned technical challenges. TekSavvy submitted that including STIR/SHAKEN data would not improve the call traceback process and would delay the processing of traceback requests.

Commission's analysis

49. STIR/SHAKEN is a distinct technology that was deployed by TSPs, at the direction of the Commission in Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision 2021-123, to combat spoofing on Internet Protocol (IP)-based voice calls. Under this framework, TSPs must authenticate the validity of the caller ID of subscribers placing calls in their network, digitally sign an attestation, and send this data with the calls to their destination.

50. The purpose of adding STIR/SHAKEN information (such as the identity of the signing TSP and the level of attestation) to the traceback form would be to improve the call traceback process by providing additional data to help identify the source of the call.

51. The Commission therefore considers that TSPs should be required to include STIR/SHAKEN data in the traceback form, unless it is not technically possible to do so. TSPs that do not provide IP-based voice services or those that do not perform STIR/SHAKEN authentication themselves

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[2] STIR/SHAKEN is a suite of protocols and procedures intended to address spoofed calls delivered through Internet Protocol technology by providing authentication and verification of caller ID information. STIR stands for Secure Telephone Identity Revisited. SHAKEN stands for Signature-based Handling of Asserted Information using toKENs.

(i.e. do not posses their own STIR/SHAKEN token) would not be required to provide STIR/SHAKEN information.

Publication of traceback data

Positions of parties

52. Regarding the appropriateness of publishing individual traceback results,[3] most interveners opposed publishing the names of Canadian carriers involved, citing reputational risks. They also indicated that it would not be an effective way of addressing the causes of nuisance calls.

53. Most interveners supported publishing anonymized statistics to raise public awareness and identify trends. However, comments on the types of data to publish were vague.

Commission's analysis

54. The Commission recognizes interveners' concerns that publishing individual traceback results may cause more harm than benefit. The Commission agrees that it would be inappropriate to publish individual traceback results at this time.

55. Regarding the publication of anonymized statistics, the submissions on the record have not identified the aggregated information that would be useful to the public. Accordingly, the Commission will not publish aggregated statistics at this time.

Automation of the traceback process

Positions of parties

56. Although the Notice did not specifically seek comments on the issue of increasing the use of automation in the traceback process, many interveners suggested doing so in order to reduce the work required to process traceback requests.

Commission's analysis

57. The Commission notes that greater use of automation was previously recommended by the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC).[4]

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[3] Individual traceback results include the following: (i) the associated call campaign of a specific traceback request; (ii) the date and time of the call; and (iii), for domestic calls, the originating Canadian carrier, and for international calls, the first Canadian carrier and the last foreign carrier in the call path.

[4] The CISC Network Working Group recommended the use of more automation in the traceback process in *Canadian Traceback Interim Process*, Consensus Report NTRE064, which the Commission approved in Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision 2021-268.

58. Accordingly, the Commission requests that CISC explore automation options for traceback requests and report its findings to the Commission by **28 September 2026**.

Conclusion

59. In light of all of the above, the Commission considers that requiring all TSPs providing voice telecommunications services to implement the call traceback process as a condition of providing voice services is appropriate.

60. The Commission therefore directs all TSPs that provide voice telecommunications services, as a condition of offering and providing voice services under sections 24 and 24.1 of the *Telecommunications Act* (the Act), to participate in the call traceback process once they have received their first traceback request. This condition of service will become effective on **25 June 2026**.

61. Commission staff will assist new participants with the onboarding process and provide them with administrative support when they receive their first traceback request. While Commission staff will initiate contact, new participants can email depistage-traceback@crtc.gc.ca should they require assistance from staff.

62. The Commission also makes the following determinations related to the operational issues raised in this proceeding:

- Foreign traceback requests are to be addressed by the Commission, not TSPs.
- TSPs must provide the name of the upstream TSP when responding to traceback requests.
- TSPs must maintain call data for a minimum of 10 calendar days.
- TSPs must respond to traceback requests within two business days, subject to providing reasonable justification if unable to do so.
- The current weekly limit of 10 traceback requests for each TSP, and 40 for the entire industry, will be maintained. These limits apply to each legal entity individually, not to groups of companies.
- For calls that have been authenticated by the STIR/SHAKEN process, TSPs must include the identity of the signing TSP and the level of attestation, where technically feasible.
- Traceback results will not be published.

63. In addition, the Commission requests CISC to (i) review the onboarding process to ensure that it is as straightforward and efficient as possible; and (ii) examine how to incorporate more

automation into the call traceback process. The Commission requests CISC to report its findings by **28 September 2026**.

Policy Direction

64. The Commission considers that its determinations in this decision are consistent with the 2023 Policy Direction.[5] Specifically, they further the implementation of the telecommunications policy objectives set out in paragraphs 7(a) and (h) of the Act.[6] Mandating participation in the call traceback process will help protect Canadians by enabling the Commission to better identify the origin of calls that do not comply with the Unsolicited Telecommunications Rules, so that enforcement action can be taken at, or close to, the source of such calls. Enforcement action against nuisance calls responds to both the social and economic needs of consumers.

65. The Commission also considers that its determinations in this decision are consistent with section 4 of the 2023 Policy Direction in that they are efficient and proportionate measures that balance the need for better enforcement tools with the burden imposed on TSPs.

66. Finally, the determinations in this decision are consistent with section 6 of the 2023 Policy Direction in that the Commission is using its authority to obtain necessary evidence that is sound and recent. The call traceback process is a tried and tested evidence gathering tool that is responsive to this objective.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Call for comments – Proposed conditions of service requiring implementation of the call traceback process by telecommunications service providers providing voice telecommunications services*, Compliance and Enforcement Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-43, 28 February 2024, as amended by Compliance and Enforcement Notice of Consultation CRTC 2024-43-1, 4 March 2024

- *CISC Network Working Group Consensus Report – Canadian traceback trial report,* Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision CRTC 2021-268, 5 August 2021

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

[6] The cited policy objectives are: 7(a) to facilitate the orderly development throughout Canada of a telecommunications system that serves to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the social and economic fabric of Canada and its regions; and 7(h) to respond to the economic and social requirements of users of telecommunications services.

- *STIR/SHAKEN implementation for Internet Protocol-based voice calls,* Compliance and Enforcement and Telecom Decision CRTC 2021-123, 6 April 2021