

*The Disabled*

which were attached to the telephone companies' lines. Over the past ten years, however, this situation has been changing, particularly in the Territories served by the four telephone companies I mentioned a few moments ago. Over much of this period, the federal Department of Communications has sponsored a program known as the Terminal Attachment Program which has put in place mechanisms for an orderly transition to an environment in which telephone company subscribers can attach their own devices to the telephone networks.

Over the same period, the CRTC has made regulatory decisions which have progressively given subscribers greater choice and flexibility in deciding on the kind of telecommunications equipment they want and whether they will lease it from the carrier or buy from an independent supplier. It is worthwhile to describe briefly the work of the program advisory committee, TAPAC, which has played a major role in the orderly development of the telecommunications industry in Canada.

In 1975, the Department of Communications, recognizing the evolutionary change in the telecommunications environment, proposed the creation of a committee dedicated to the development of terminal equipment standards which could be used in the telecommunications industry across the country. Under the chairmanship of the Department of Communications, a voluntary co-operative committee was formed composed of provincial Governments, federally regulated common carriers, telecommunications equipment manufacturers and suppliers as well as representatives from consumer associations and users. TAPAC's first work was on terminal attachment standards for network non-addressing devices, that is, devices which cannot be used to dial directly into the telephone network. An example of such devices is the well known automatic telephone answering machine. When a consensus is reached within TAPAC, its decisions are referred to the Department of Communications and are published in the *Canada Gazette* for public comment. Upon completion of this process, the standards are issued by the Department. The committee has now completed the development of standards for network addressing devices, which include the ordinary single line telephone, of which some 10 million are currently in operation in this country.

As I have said, matters progressed in an orderly fashion, and in 1980, the CRTC made an important decision with respect to Bell Canada. At that time the CRTC issued a decision which permitted ordinary extension telephones purchased by subscribers to be attached to Bell's lines. This was the first such decision in Canada. Prior to this, only certain kinds of business equipment could be attached to Bell's lines, and many telephone companies permitted no subscriber-provided equipment to be attached without special protective couplings which were to be provided by the telephone company at a tariffed rate.

While many subscribers welcomed this decision, one group of Canadians, the hearing impaired, viewed it with some concern. The concern of the hearing impaired was as follows: hearing aids which are equipped with a device called a telecoil

can, when the telecoil is activated by the hearing aid T-switch, detect and amplify the magnetic field generated by certain telephones. However, not all telephones generate sufficient magnetic field to activate a telecoil hearing aid. Some telephone receivers must have a flux coil added. The flux coil increases the magnetic field sufficiently to be detected by a telecoil.

Just prior to the 1980 CRTC decision, representatives of the hearing impaired had held lengthy discussions with Bell Canada, and Bell had made a very public spirited commitment. Bell Canada had committed itself to equipping all of its telephones with flux coils. Thus, the hearing impaired were assured that any telephone leased from Bell would work with a hearing aid equipped with a T-switch. With a decision that subscribers could attach their own telephones to Bell's network, the hearing impaired were concerned that a proliferation of non-Bell telephones would lead to a situation where telephones would not generally be compatible with hearing aids equipped with telecoils.

In the fall of 1981, the CRTC held an extensive public hearing into the issue of attachment of subscriber-provided equipment to the networks of federally regulated carriers. Representations were made by 30 representatives of various organizations interested in the matter, including three associations representing hearing impaired persons. These associations were the Canadian Hearing Society, the Canadian Co-ordinating Council on Deafness, and the Hard of Hearing Club of Ottawa. Groups representing the hearing impaired urged the CRTC to prescribe technical standards which would ensure that all telephones are compatible with hearing aids that are equipped with a telecoil. Representatives of the hearing impaired were concerned that in an environment in which consumers and businesses can purchase their own primary telephone set, and in the absence of appropriate technical standards, an increasing percentage of telephones will not be compatible with hearing aids. Also, they expressed the view that access to telecommunications services would be reduced owing to the fact that private or business users would be able to purchase telephones which are not hearing aid compatible.

On November 23, 1982, the CRTC issued its final decision, Telecom Decision CRTC 82-14, which concluded that it was in the public interest that the terminal attachment policy that was established as a result of the 1980 interim decision be continued. The liberalization of ownership of telephone equipment and other devices to be connected to the federally regulated common carriers' public networks is now a fait accompli and has generally met with positive reaction.

In its decision, the Commission stated its view that any device necessary to permit a disabled person to have access to the telephone network should continue to be priced at a level as low as possible, and that it continues to be committed to ensuring that hearing impaired persons have access to telephone service in the most effective and efficient manner. The evidence presented at the public hearings, however, did not convince the Commission that requiring all telephones to be hearing aid compatible is the most feasible way of achieving