



Canadian Common Short Code Compliance Policies

Version 2.1



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1. About this guide

Common Short Codes (CSCs) are three- to six-digit numbers that replace traditional telephone numbers to send text or multimedia messages to a mobile device. Any organization that uses CSCs in Canada must abide by a range of rules, laws and regulations that govern the delivery of these types of messages, including Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL).

The Canadian Telecommunications Association¹ ("the Association") is responsible for administering CSC programs in Canada, which includes enforcing the wireless carriers' requirements for the use of these programs. This guide, previously referred to as "*The Canadian Common Short Code Application Guidelines*", was developed to help organizations establish and maintain compliant CSC programs by:

- Describing the CSC program standards, requirements, and best practices that must be followed by content providers, brands, aggregators, and application service providers (ASPs)
- Providing organizations that use CSCs with resources related to applicable legislation, including CASL
- Advocating for the protection of consumers by implementing program standards to reduce spam and other malicious messages
- Facilitating the continued growth and adoption of CSC programs in Canada by ensuring they are seen as a trusted communications channel by consumers

Failure to comply with the standards and requirements presented in this guide may result in penalties against the offender, as set out in the [Canadian Common Short Code Infractions Guide](#).

This guide may be updated from time to time. For the most recent version, please see www.txt.ca.

1.1 Key principles

The following items are the obligations of CSC content providers and/or aggregators and must be complied with:

1. CSC programs must obtain end user consent before any messages are sent. Sending unsolicited messages, spam, and/or phishing is strictly prohibited.
2. CSC programs must provide an opt-out mechanism using the STOP/ARRET command. Examples of other opt-out commands that should be respected include CANCEL, UNSUBSCRIBE, QUIT, and END.
3. CSC programs must never be used to send content related to hate speech, profanity, depictions or endorsements of violence, or any unlawful content.
4. CSC programs must not use deceptive or misleading promotion/advertising to gain participation in the program.
5. All messages sent to an end user must accurately identify the CSC number and the brand/organization from which the message was sent (or sent on behalf of).

¹ The Canadian Telecommunications Association was formerly named the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association.

6. Consumers who send a message to a CSC number must receive a response from that same number.
7. Once a CSC program has been approved, it must not be altered without subsequent approval. A CSC program must not be re-assigned, re-sold, or subleased without approval.
8. End users must be informed of the cost of participating in a CSC program at the time of opt-in (e.g., “std msg rates may apply”). If a message includes a clickable link to a website, the message must state that “data rates may apply”. The statement that “std msg and data rates may apply” is equally appropriate and acceptable.
9. For a CSC program to be included in the www.txt.ca [listing of current programs](#), the content provider and/or aggregator must provide customer support. This must include at least one of the following:
 - a) A web-based support page
 - b) An email address
 - c) A phone number

If a phone number is the only option for receiving customer support, it must be a toll-free number.

10. CSC programs must send responses to the following five mandatory keywords:
 - **HELP:** Identify the message sender or program name, customer support information, price, and opt-out information. Texting HELP must return an English response.
 - **AIDE:** Identify the message sender or program name, customer support information, price, and opt-out information. Texting AIDE must return a French response.
 - **INFO:** Identify the message sender or program name and customer support information. Texting INFO must return a bilingual response.
 - **STOP:** Immediately opt the user out of receiving any further messages. Texting STOP must return an English response.
 - **ARRET:** Immediately opt the user out of receiving any further messages. Texting ARRET must return a French response.
11. CSC programs involving time-sensitive information (e.g., breaking news, stock updates, critical communications) must include timestamps indicating the date and time the information was produced.
12. CSC programs that provide urgent/critical communications must not be advertised or promoted using the word “emergency”.
13. The length of text messages sent to end users must not exceed 320 characters or two message segments, whichever is shorter.
14. Content providers must ensure their programs are not misleading. If a Short Code is promoted as a brand name or trademark (e.g., BELL instead of 2355), the content provider is responsible for guaranteeing that it has the right to use that brand name or trademark.

15. CSC programs involving age-restricted content such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, gambling, or other mature content (e.g., nudity) must verify that each user is of legal age in their province or territory before participating in the program.

CSC programs that do not comply with these requirements may be suspended or revoked.

For more information on each of these obligations, see the “CSC program requirements” section of this guide.

2. About CSCs

Common Short Codes (CSCs) are unique numbers that can send and receive text or multimedia messages. In Canada, they are typically three to six digits long, making them easier to remember and faster to type than standard 10-digit phone numbers. These codes are generally used for mobile messaging applications offered by content providers or aggregators, such as contests, promotions, mobile coupons, subscriptions, two-factor authentication codes, transactional alerts, and other on-demand content.

CSCs were first made available in 2003 through collaboration between the Association and Canada’s wireless carriers. Today, content providers, ASPs, and aggregators can lease CSCs from the Association, which are then activated across and delivered through participating carriers’ networks using SMPP, HTTPS, or other methods of connectivity that may vary by carrier. Organizations using CSCs are required to adhere to the technical specifications and procedures set out by the wireless carriers.

Role of the Association

The Association administers all CSC programs on behalf of the wireless carriers, and is mandated with investigating and acting on violations of the standards and requirements in this document in the best interests of CSC end users. The Association conducts regular audits of CSC programs, investigates complaints and self-reported infractions, and maintains infraction records.

Participating wireless carriers currently include:

- BCE Inc. (incl. Bell Mobility, PC Mobile, Virgin Plus, Lucky Mobile)
- Eastlink
- Execulink
- Fibernetics
- Freedom Mobile
- Iristel (incl. ICE Wireless)
- Rogers (incl. Chatr, Fido)
- SaskTel
- SSI Canada
- Tbaytel
- TELUS (incl. Koodo, Public Mobile)
- Vidéotron (incl. Fizz)
- Wightman Telecom

2.1 CSC program pricing categories

CSC programs fall broadly into three pricing categories:

- **Free to end user:** These programs are entirely free to end users, with no fees or charges associated with messaging to the end user.
- **Standard rate:** These programs may incur standard messaging rates for end users. These are typically included in users’ existing text messaging plans with their carriers and do not result in additional fees.

- **Premium rate:** These programs involve additional charges above and beyond end users' existing text messaging plans. For more details on the policies and requirements for premium-rate programs, see [Appendix B](#).

2.2 Common use cases

These use cases are common CSC program types and can be used independently or in conjunction with one another. This is not an exhaustive list but is meant to capture the use cases that are most frequently used.

- **Two-factor authentication (2FA):** One-time message containing a PIN or one-time password for identity validation.
- **Appointment reminders:** Reminder notifications about upcoming scheduled appointments.
- **Banking alerts:** Used to inform consumers of completed transactions, to provide low-balance warnings, or to advise of a purchase threshold reached.
- **Cart abandonment:** Reminder notifications about unpurchased items in online shopping carts.
- **Charitable giving:** Used to facilitate donations by credit card to charitable organizations, non-profits, or political parties. For information on wireless carrier-billed donations via a Common Short Code, please contact the Mobile Giving Foundation Canada at support@mobilegiving.ca.
- **Chat:** Consumers interact with a customer service agent or chat bot. Typically, a chat involves a 1:1 ratio of messages sent to and received from the consumer and is conversational in nature.
- **Contests:** Programs offering chances to win prizes.
- **Debt collection:** Used to settle outstanding debts or delinquent accounts either directly by or on behalf of creditors. Purchased debt collection (debt that has been sold from the original creditor) is considered a special use case.
- **Delivery notifications:** Updates consumers on the delivery status of items.
- **Demo/testing:** Used for demonstrations and/or for internal end-to-end testing purposes.
- **Fraud alerts:** Used to flag suspected fraudulent activity or data breaches tied to an account.
- **Info-on-demand:** Used to provide consumers with one-time information such as product or service details.
- **Marketing:** Notifying consumers about sales and promotions to drive traffic to a website or a storefront.
- **Payment reminders:** Used to remind consumers of upcoming payments that are due or to remind of missed or late payments.

- **Transit updates or alerts:** Used to send consumers updates about transit schedules (such as next bus or train arrival) or to provide updates about upcoming flights.
- **Voting/surveys:** Used to collect feedback or responses from an audience or customer. This can be done directly through the CSC program, or the program can be used to send a link to complete a survey or poll.

2.3 CSC application and approval process

The application and approval process for CSCs is administered by the Association upon direction from the Short Code Council (SCC). All programs are approved by the SCC, and wireless carrier participation in approved programs is solely at their individual discretion.

Content providers and aggregators submit their CSC applications, along with payment for the non-refundable deposit, to the Association, which reviews them for completeness and compliance with identified CSC requirements before they are provided to the SCC for consideration. At least two wireless carriers must agree to participate in a program for it to be approved. If approved, a CSC lease will be granted for a maximum of 12 months (six months for premium-rate programs). Programs in good standing may be permitted to renew their leases for up to 12 months at a time (six months for premium-rate programs).

All programs must undergo pre-launch testing before they are made commercially available (see Section 3.3 for details). All programs are also subject to ongoing compliance testing to ensure they adhere to all policies outlined in this document. Infractions will be reported to the wireless carriers and may result in penalties for the offender. See the [Canadian Common Short Code Infractions Guide](#) for more information.

Compliance testing

The Association performs ongoing compliance testing on all CSC programs. All organizations using CSCs must comply with all inquiries and requests for information that result from this testing.

If identified issues are not resolved, the content provider, aggregator or ASP may be prohibited from submitting applications for new CSCs or face additional penalties, including suspension or deactivation of existing CSC programs.

Changes can be made to an approved CSC program at any time by submitting a revised application through the Short Code Program Management Portal (PMP). In instances where the content provider or brand submits the application, they must first submit the application to their Aggregator who will then make the submission in the PMP on their behalf. In cases where the scope of the program is changing entirely (i.e. repurposed for a new brand), a new deposit may be required for such revised applications.

For more details on the CSC application, approval process and lease fees see [Apply for a Short Code](#) on the Canadian Common Short Codes website (<https://www.txt.ca/en/>).

3. CSC program requirements

This section details the policies and requirements organizations must follow when delivering CSC programs. It covers broadly applicable topics such as consent and program management, as well as special use cases such as age-restricted content and political messaging. The content in this section is applicable primarily to free and standard-rate programs. Organizations planning to run premium-rate programs should see [Appendix B](#) for the requirements related to that messaging type.

Any violation of these policies may result in penalties that could include removing program authorization or lease termination at the applicant's expense.

Please note that certain types of content, such as hate speech, profanity, depictions or endorsements of violence, or any other unlawful content, are never permitted in CSC programs.

It is important to note that nothing contained in this document confirms any legal compliance. It is the responsibility of the content provider to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including Canada's anti-spam legislation. At the same time, compliance with laws such as *Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation* (CASL) is not the same as compliance with the standards and requirements outlined in this document. What may be allowed under CASL may not be allowed under the Canadian CSC Compliance Policies. Content providers must ensure compliance with all applicable laws and the Canadian CSC Compliance Policies.

3.1 Consent

Under CASL, individuals and businesses must obtain an end user's consent before sending commercial electronic messages, such as emails or texts. (For more information about CASL, visit <https://fightspam.gc.ca>.) Consent is required for all CSC programs and may be revoked at any time by the end user. The sending of unsolicited messages is strictly prohibited.

Regardless of the consent type obtained, the brand or organization that obtains the consent is the only party that can send a message to a consumer who provided the consent. Additionally, consent is limited to the specified purpose. Consumers should not receive any messages beyond what they have agreed to, without providing additional consent.

3.1.1 Opt-in: Express consent

Express consent is the explicit permission from a consumer to be contacted by or to participate in a CSC program. Express consent does not expire; however, the consumer has the right to withdraw their consent at any time. Content must not be delivered until after the consumer has confirmed their desire to participate in a CSC program. Wherever possible, express consent should be obtained. Express consent can be obtained by:

- Providing a mobile number online
- Verbally providing a mobile number and/or consent over the phone
- Texting to initiate communication with a CSC program
- Providing a mobile number and/or consent in writing on a paper or electronic form

For CSC programs that send time-sensitive or informational notifications, language should be included at the time of opt-in making it clear that the program will not be used to send any type of [“Broadcast Immediate” emergency alerts](#).

3.1.2 Opt-in: Implied consent

Implied consent is a form of opt-in not explicitly provided by an individual. Instead, consent is implicitly granted by an end user's existing relationship with a business or through an agreement between the end user and a business that includes language describing how end users may be contacted using the information they have voluntarily provided. (Most financial institutions have these kinds of agreements with all their customers, for example.)

The use of implied consent for CSC programs requires explicit approval from the wireless carriers. These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Under CASL, implied consent typically expires after a fixed period (e.g., two years), unless the end user opts in expressly. The acceptable use of implied consent under CASL does not guarantee approval for the use of implied consent using a CSC.

Additional best practice to send a confirmation or welcome message

Acknowledgement of opt-in is recommended. A confirmation, “thank you”, or “welcome” message should be sent following an opt-in, regardless of the opt-in method, in order to ensure a positive user experience.

Best efforts should be made to send opt-in confirmation promptly following the opt-in, ideally within 48 hours. Where opt-in is provided manually (e.g., via a paper form), the confirmation or welcome message should be sent within 30 days.

Example of a confirmation/welcome message for express consent:

Message from ABC Airline: You are subscribed to alerts for upcoming flight A912. To opt out of flight alerts, text STOP. Std msg rates may apply.

Example of a confirmation/welcome message for implied consent:

Message from XYZ Bank: You have been subscribed to low balance warning alerts under Bill-C86. To opt out, text STOP. Std msg rates may apply.

3.1.3 Privacy policies and terms and conditions

Content providers are responsible for protecting the privacy of end users’ information and must comply with and adhere to all applicable privacy laws.

When terms and conditions are displayed, they must be entirely visible to the end user, with no part hidden or obscured. Terms associated with participating in a program must be clear and conspicuous.

If an end user is asked to confirm or accept terms and conditions, the box indicating acceptance must not be automatically pre-checked.

3.1.4 Consent records

Once a consumer has volunteered to participate in a CSC program or has been opted-in using implied consent, consent records must be retained by the content provider or brand.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has the right to investigate or perform a compliance check. In this case, the content provider will need to produce proof of consent and a copy of the brand or content provider’s information management policies.

Good record-keeping practices may help businesses:²

- Identify potential non-compliance issues
- Investigate and respond to consumer complaints
- Respond to questions about their practices and procedures
- Monitor their corporate compliance programs

² <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/com500/guide.htm>

- Identify the need for corrective actions and demonstrate that these actions were implemented
- Establish a due diligence defence in the event of complaints to the CRTC against them

Companies should maintain hard copy and/or electronic records of the following:

- Commercial electronic message policies and procedures
- Unsubscribe requests and resulting actions
- All evidence of express consent (e.g., audio recordings, completed forms) from consumers who agree to receive commercial electronic messages
- Commercial electronic message recipient consent logs
- Commercial electronic message scripts
- Commercial electronic message campaign records
- Staff training documents and other business procedures

3.1.5 Transferring consent

Generally speaking, consent is granted by a consumer to a brand for a specific use case. For example, a consumer agreeing to be sent a two-factor authentication code must not be automatically opted-in to marketing alerts. Similarly, a brand that has collected consumer consent cannot share that consent with partners, affiliates, or subsidiaries, without the consumer's permission.

Transferring consent is appropriate when an acquisition has taken place and the use case remains the same. When consent has been transferred from one organization to another and the overall use case remains the same, the consumer should be made aware, but re-opt-in is optional and not necessary. If the use case changes because of an acquisition, wireless carrier approval and re-opt-in are required.

3.1.6 Subscription vs. Non-subscription programs

Subscription programs deliver content to a consumer on an ongoing basis until the consumer chooses to withdraw their consent and opt out. Non-subscription programs deliver either one-time only messages (i.e. one-time use) that are triggered or initiated by the consumer or multiple messages within a specified time frame to opted in users (i.e. session/event based) where messages are expected to cease after the original event, unless the user opts in again. There are additional compliance requirements for subscription programs due to the recurring nature:

- Subscription programs require a handset verifier or double opt-in to ensure that the correct user is opting in to the program.
- Subscription programs need to state the message frequency in the HELP and AIDE mandatory keywords.

3.1.6.1 Handset verifier for subscription programs

If a consumer gives consent to subscribe to recurring alerts using a web-based, manually entered, written, or verbal opt-in, the use of a handset verifier (also commonly referred to as a double opt-in) is required. A handset verifier allows the content provider to positively confirm that the authorized subscriber is acknowledging the opt-in. Programs using a keyword or MO opt-in do not require the use of a handset verifier. A handset verifier must include:

- Program or brand name

- The exact instructions for the consumer's action (e.g., "Reply Y to subscribe" or "Enter PIN 1234 online to complete subscription")
- Program price
- Message frequency
- Details on how to opt out of the program using STOP/ARRET

Examples of handset verifiers:	
EN: <i>ABC Deliveries: Reply Y to subscribe to marketing alerts. 3 alerts/week. To opt out, reply STOP. Std msg rates may apply.</i>	FR: <i>Livraison ABC: Répondez O pour abonner aux alertes de marketing. 3 alertes/sem. Pour désabonner, répondez ARRET. Frais std peuvent s'appliquer.</i>

3.1.6.2 Session/event based alerts

For programs that are initiated by a specific event, for example flight updates or delivery notifications, and where the opt-in is web-based, manually entered, written, or verbal, it is expected that alerts will cease automatically once the event has ended. These are not considered subscription programs, and therefore, use of the handset verifier is not required, however, the first message that an end user receives must include:

- Program or brand name
- Program price
- Details on how to opt out of the program using STOP/ARRET

Examples:	
EN: <i>ABC Deliveries: Your order has been confirmed. You'll receive an update when it's ready to be shipped! To opt out, reply STOP. Std msg rates may apply.</i>	FR: <i>Livraison ABC: Votre commande a été traitée. Vous recevrez une mise à jour lorsque votre commande sera expédiée. Pour désabonner, répondez ARRET. Frais std peuvent s'appliquer.</i>

3.1.6.3 One-time use

For programs that send one-time only messages (e.g. 2FA), unless reinitiated by the consumer, the message that a user receives must include:

- Program or brand name

Examples:	
EN: <i>ABC Bank: Your verification code is 12345.</i>	FR: <i>Banque ABC : votre code de vérification est 12345.</i>

3.1.7 Transferring subscriber lists

Only consumers who have opted into a CSC program may be transferred to another CSC program, and the program's content must remain as initially promoted to the consumer. In addition, the following must be followed:

- Organizations may transfer a list of subscribers from one CSC program to another in instances where the subscribers have opted in using valid mechanisms.

- For example, a transfer could occur when an organization has built a subscriber base by obtaining opt-ins on a Shared Common-Use Short Code and would like to transfer their subscribers to a dedicated CSC.
- Before transferring subscribers to the new CSC, organizations must send a single message to each subscriber from the original number that provides:
 - The identity of the program by company name or organization name
 - A note that the CSC associated with the subscription service will be changing
 - The new CSC
 - Instructions on how to get more information using keywords HELP or AIDE

The same requirements apply if a content provider intends to transfer a list of opted-in subscribers from a 10-digit number or a toll-free number to a CSC.

3.1.8 Opt-out

Consumer consent for a CSC program can be revoked at any time, and all involved parties must honour and action every opt-out request.

If a consumer opts out of a program, their mobile number must be removed from contact or subscription lists and no further messages may be sent, with the exception of one acknowledgement message that the user has successfully opted out or unsubscribed. It is recommended that opt-outs for a given CSC program should not exceed 4%.

Additionally:

- CSC programs must promote opt-out keywords STOP and ARRET where required.
- Other universal opt-out commands should be recognized, such as END, CANCEL, UNSUBSCRIBE, QUIT or FIN, ANNULER, QUITTER, DESABONNER in French.
- Opt-out via a URL, online account, call centre, or paper form must also be accepted. These opt-out methods must be in addition to supporting STOP/ARRET.
- A consumer must be able to opt back into a program at their discretion and should not be blocked/blacklisted from the CSC program after texting an opt-out keyword. If STOP/ARRET does block/blacklist a user from the CSC program, then implementing a re-opt-in keyword (e.g. START) must be included in the opt-out confirmation message.

3.2 Program management standards

The CSC program standards described below are intended to promote good messaging practices and a positive user experience.

3.2.1 Message origin

If a consumer sends a message to a CSC, the response they receive must come from the same number to which the message was sent.

In cases where a brand is leveraging an SMS opt-in using a CSC and then transitioning eligible consumers to RBM, this is acceptable. In these cases, it is expected and acceptable that initial opt-in takes place via CSC and then subsequent messages to the consumer are delivered via RBM.

3.2.2 Mandatory customer support keywords

The following five keywords must be implemented for all CSC programs, regardless of price point, intended audience, message frequency, subscription status, or commercial availability:

- STOP
- ARRET
- HELP
- AIDE
- INFO

These five keywords must be:

- Promoted in CAPITAL LETTERS to emphasize importance (however, the keywords themselves must not be case sensitive)
- Available in both English and French regardless of the intended audience (e.g., a French-only program must return English responses to HELP and STOP)
- No more than one message segment or 160 characters (as they are administrative in nature)
- Delivered free of charge wherever possible

Keyword	Intention	Message content requirements	
HELP	Must provide the consumer with high-level program information and customer support/contact information for the brand or content provider. NOTE: If a single CSC is running service for multiple clients, the content provider must provide details for the response.	HELP must generate one English response that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program name or brand name and a short description of the program • Contact information for the brand or content provider (email, URL and/or phone number) NOTE: If a phone number is the only method of contact, it must be a toll-free number. • Cost • Message frequency of the program, if a subscription • Opt-out/unsubscribe information using STOP 	
		Example non-subscription response: <i>ABC Transit Info: Questions or info? Visit: https://abctransit.ca. Text STOP to cancel. StdMsg&DataRatesApply</i>	Example subscription response: <i>XYZ Loyalty Programs: Up to 2 msgs/week. For help, email support@abc.com. Std msg rates may apply. Reply STOP to cancel.</i>
AIDE		AIDE must generate one French response including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program name or brand name and a short description of the program • Contact information for the brand or content provider (email, URL and/or phone number) NOTE: If a phone number is the only method of contact, it must be a toll-free number. • Cost 	

Keyword	Intention	Message content requirements	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Message frequency of the program, if a subscription Opt-out/unsubscribe information using ARRET 	
		Example non-subscription response: <i>Service de transport ABC : Questions ou info? Visitez https://abctransot.ca Répondez ARRET pour annuler. FraisStdDeMsg&DonnéesPeuvS'appl</i>	Example subscription response: <i>Promos de XYZ : Jusqu'à 2 msgs/sem. Pour de l'aide : soutien@abc.com Frais std de msgs s'appliquent. Répondez ARRET pour désabonner.</i>
INFO	Must provide the consumer with brand/program name and customer support information.	INFO must generate one bilingual response including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program name or brand name Contact information for the brand or content provider (email, URL and/or phone number) NOTE: If a phone number is the only method of contact, it must be a toll-free number. 	
	NOTE: If a single CSC is running service for multiple clients, the content provider must provide details for the response.	Example non-subscription response: <i>ABC Transit Info: Have questions or need assistance? Call 1-800-555-5555 Info de transport ABC : Questions ou besoin de l'aide? Appelez 1-800-555-5555</i>	Example subscription response: <i>XYZ Loyalty Promotions: Have questions or need assistance? Call 1-800-555-5555 Promotions de XYZ : Questions ou besoin de l'aide? Appelez 1-800-555-5555</i>
STOP	Must immediately opt the consumer out of the program. Once the response has been sent, no further messages may be sent to the consumer unless they opt back in to the service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For subscription services, STOP must generate one English response indicating that the consumer will receive no further messages in connection with any services running on the CSC. For non-subscription services (one-time use, such as 2FA), the message should state that the service is not a subscription and the consumer will receive no further messages, unless service is reinitiated by the consumer. The STOP keyword must always be available whether the program is commercially active or not. Consumers must not receive an error message in response to this keyword. In some cases, if a CSC is used to support multiple programs or campaigns, a response may be sent to direct users to a URL to update their contact preferences. Explicit approval is required. Texting STOP should not block/blacklist the end user from the CSC program. Responses to all mandatory keywords is expected even after an opt-out keyword has been sent. 	

Keyword	Intention	Message content requirements	
		Example non-subscription response: <i>ABC Transit Info: This is not a subscription service. You will not receive any further messages.</i>	Example subscription response: <i>XYZ Loyalty Programs: You have successfully unsubscribed and will not receive any further messages.</i>
ARRET		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For subscription services, ARRET must generate one French response indicating that the user will receive no further messages in connection with any services running on the CSC. For non-subscription services (one-time use, such as 2FA), the message should state that the service is not a subscription and the consumer will receive no further messages, unless service is reinitiated by the consumer. The ARRET keyword must always be available whether the program is commercially active or not. Consumers must not receive an error message in response to this keyword. In some cases, if a CSC is used to support multiple programs or campaigns, a response may be sent to direct users to a URL to update their contact preferences. Explicit approval is required. Texting ARRET should not block/blacklist the end user from the CSC program. Responses to all mandatory keywords is expected even after an opt-out keyword has been sent. 	
		Example non-subscription response: <i>Service de transport ABC : Ceci n'est pas un service d'abonnement. Vous ne recevrez plus de messages.</i>	Example subscription response: <i>Promos de XYZ : Vous vous êtes désabonné et ne recevrez plus de messages.</i>

The keywords STOP ALL and ARRET TOUT, while not mandatory keywords, should also be active and should function the same way as the STOP or ARRET keywords on all programs.

3.2.3 URLs and email addresses

Content providers must ensure URLs and email addresses included within a message (whether raw or embedded) do not misrepresent the sender's identity and are not malicious or deceptive. Additionally:

- URLs and email addresses within a message should identify the brand and owner of the website or email domain (e.g. <https://canadatelecoms.ca/> or shortcodes@canadatelecoms.ca).
- Shortened URLs should be avoided if they do not include the brand or content provider's name. Shortened URLs can look like spam and are more likely to be caught in spam filtering mechanisms.
- URLs within a message must bring the consumer to a valid webpage and must not be broken or lead to an error page. Similarly, email addresses must be active.
- Messages that contain a URL must state that "data rates may apply".

3.2.4 Demo and test codes

Demo or test CSC programs used for the purposes of conducting internal, end-to-end testing must not be provisioned in the production environment.

Programs intended for external, customer-facing demos are acceptable, but they must be clearly referenced as such in the program application.

Demo and test programs must respect all program requirements, including the mandatory keywords (STOP, ARRET, HELP, AIDE, INFO).

3.2.5 Character limit

CSC messages sent to consumers must not exceed two message segments or 320 characters, whichever is shorter.

CSC messages should be treated differently than email. They should be concise and to the point. Reasonable exceptions include chat/conversational programs and programs that may need to send messages bilingually. Content providers or aggregators that want to exceed the character limit must submit a revised application for approval by the wireless carriers.

3.2.6 Scrubbing deactivated numbers

A deactivated number is a number that has been removed from a wireless carrier's network, often as a result of a contract cancellation between the wireless carrier and the customer. When a wireless carrier deactivates a number, that number will eventually be made available for use by another customer (typically after 90 days). To ensure that number is no longer associated with any CSC programs, content providers, aggregators and ASPs must scrub deactivated numbers from their databases.

If deactivation lists are not provided by the wireless carriers directly as a best practice, mobile numbers should be deleted in cases where:

- Text messages have been undeliverable for a period of 30 consecutive days
AND
- It can be determined that the unsuccessful deliveries are due to the number being inactive on the wireless carrier network

Additional program management best practices

The following best practices are not required, but are highly recommended to deliver a positive user experience.

Quiet hours

It is recommended that marketing messages be sent between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. only. Informational alerts such as transactional messages, fraud alerts, account recovery/2FA, and appointment reminders should be sent as needed.

Dormant code messages

If a CSC program is inactive for a period of time, it is recommended to implement a customer service message that will be returned if a customer sends a message to the CSC. The message should indicate the status of the program and should provide customer service or support information for the content provider or brand.

English message example:

*Thanks for your text. This program is over.
Please check www.abcde.ca for more
details. Data rates may apply.*

French message example:

*Merci pour votre message. Ce programme
est terminé. Veuillez visiter
www.abcde.ca pour plus d'info. Frais de
données peuvent s'appliquer.*

All five mandatory keywords must continue to be supported for dormant CSC programs.

Ongoing compliance audits

It is recommended that content providers conduct regular audits throughout the duration of a campaign or program to ensure ongoing compliance. Audits should cover the following:

- Advertising: Do all calls to action include the appropriate pricing disclosures and terms?
 - Opt-in: Does the opt-in mechanism work appropriately (including welcome message, where applicable)? Are opt-in records being maintained?
 - Opt-out: Do opt-out mechanisms (such as the STOP keyword) still work properly?
 - Mandatory keywords: Are the required message elements still included and accurate?
- Spot check message logs: Is the use case still in line with how the program initially launched? Are there any changes to report? Are opt-out rates in line with expectations?

3.3 Pre-launch testing

Before any CSC program may launch commercially, it must undergo testing by the Association.

3.3.1 Pre-launch testing form

Content providers must complete the pre-launch testing form, available from the [Canadian Common Short Codes website](http://CanadianCommonShortCodes.com), and submit it to their aggregator. The aggregator must review the form for completeness and then submit it to the Association by emailing it to shortcodes@canadatelecoms.ca.

The form must be submitted to the Association no later than 10 days before the scheduled commercial launch. However, content providers and aggregators are encouraged to submit the form as early as possible to allow enough time to make any required changes.

The pre-launch testing form must include:

- Responses to all five mandatory keywords

- Opt-in keywords and the responses they will receive
- Other calls to action, including websites, online registration forms, print material, and TV or radio advertisements

The Association will test these elements to ensure they comply with the applicable sections of this document.

The Association will notify the aggregator of the pre-launch test results.

3.3.2 Non-compliance

The Association will notify the aggregator of any compliance issues, which must be corrected before the CSC program may be commercially launched.

If the identified issues are not corrected by the commercial launch date, the Association will notify the SCC, and the launch may need to be delayed. If a CSC program is launched without passing the pre-launch testing process, the Association will notify the SCC and penalties may apply.

3.4 Pricing, promotion and advertising

When promoting a CSC program, content providers must ensure advertising is clear and conspicuous regarding all terms and conditions (including any costs) associated with participating in the program.

3.4.1 Program pricing

The price of a CSC program's content is determined by the content provider, subject to the wireless carriers' approval and technical ability to charge the requested price. Standard-rate programs are generally included in consumers' text messaging plans with their wireless carriers and do not result in additional fees.

At all times, content providers must inform users of the cost of interacting with their program. No program may be promoted as being free unless it can genuinely be acquired for free by the end user.

3.4.2 Promotion and advertising

3.4.2.1 Requirements for all forms of calls to action

The following requirements apply to all forms of calls to action:

- If a messaging service costs the consumer a standard rate message fee, at the point of opt-in, content providers must clearly disclose that standard rates apply using one of the following messages:
 - Std message rates may apply
 - Message rates may apply
 - Std msg & data rates may apply
 - Msg & data rates may apply
- The program price must be displayed adjacent to the call-to-action, or mobile number entry field, and cannot be hidden within Terms & Conditions.
- Users must be clearly informed about what they are signing up for. If providing a mobile number means agreeing to receive SMS alerts, this must be explicitly stated.

- If there is a multimedia messaging component to a standard-rate program, content providers must disclose that “Std msg & data rates may apply” or “Msg & data rates may apply”.
- Promoted keywords must return a valid response. An invalid message, error message, or no response at all is not acceptable.
- If the consumer receives a message containing a clickable link to a website accessible on their mobile phone, the content of the message that includes the link must state that “Data rates may apply” or “Std msg & data rates may apply”.
- Any message containing a subsequent call to action must fully disclose the additional cost for further participation.
- Content providers and aggregators must use clear and easy-to-understand language when disclosing pricing terms, message frequency, and opt-out information. This applies to all call to action disclosures, abbreviated terms and conditions of participation in the service, and double opt-in messages.
- Content providers and aggregators should remember that content in text messages may appear as emojis on handsets that support enhanced messaging. For example, “:S” may be converted to an emoji, so that “:STOP” would appear as “😄TOP”.
- If SMS content is offered to consumers in exchange for or in advance of accessing other content, such as legitimate marketing incentives, this must be specifically stated in the CSC application form and approved by the wireless carriers. Content providers must be able to provide proof upon request that they are licensed to offer the marketing incentive.

For such programs, it must be made clear to the consumer on the mobile number entry page what they are signing up for and at what cost. The marketing incentive must be presented fairly and not misrepresented as something other than what it is (e.g., a licensed movie trailer may not be presented as the full movie). Marketing incentives may not be advertised as free unless they are truly free to the consumer. This must also be made clear to the consumer signing up for the CSC program.

3.4.2.2 Requirements for online advertising

The following requirements apply to online advertising and calls to action, including mobile websites:

1. A consumer’s mobile number must not be pre-populated in data entry fields.
2. If a consumer is asked to accept terms and conditions or provide their express consent to opt-in to a CSC program, the box indicating acceptance must not be pre-checked.

3.4.2.3 Requirements for TV advertising

The following requirements apply to TV advertising and calls to action:

1. The [thinktv guidelines](#) provide advertisers and agencies with a set of standards and requirements that must be adhered to when producing commercials, infomercials, or public service announcements for television. All CSC program applicants must abide by the appropriate guidelines when advertising their services on TV.

2. “Participation TV” is defined for the purposes of this document as the use of mobile interaction to allow viewers of a TV broadcast to engage in various ways with the broadcast content. These interactions may include having an impact (e.g., voting) or expressing an opinion (e.g., text to screen).

Participation TV visual calls to action should use a minimum of 22 or 23 scan lines or a font size of 12 to ensure the details are legible. When used in conjunction with a verbal call to action, the text should be on screen for three seconds for the first line of text plus one second for each additional line. When the call to action does not include a voiceover, a minimum of 23 scan lines should be used.

3.4.3 Promotion and advertising prohibitions

1. SMS messages must not be associated with or used to entice consumers to access content associated with any illegal practices, such as copyright violations or piracy.
2. The actual nature of the CSC program must not be obscured or promoted as something else. For example, opting in to receive a two-factor authentication code should not also opt the end user in to recurring marketing alerts.
3. CSC programs must not be used for the promotion, marketing, or endorsement of any wireless carrier without explicit approval.

3.5 Requirements for specific types of CSC programs

In addition to adhering to the policies indicated above, the following types of programs are also subject to additional requirements and guidelines.

3.5.1 Contests

The following requirements apply to all contest programs:

- All contests must offer a “no purchase necessary” method for participating.
- Contest rules and regulations must abide by all applicable local, provincial, territorial, and federal laws, and they must be available on request to any wireless carrier before the program launch.
- The application form for all programs with a contest element must include the following:
 - Details on prizes being offered, including number and any regional allocation
 - Chances of winning
 - Defined contest period
 - Draw dates
- No prize specific to an individual wireless carrier may be offered (e.g., “win a Rogers Ignite TV bundle for a year”).
- Contest winners are to be selected and prizes distributed on the basis of skill or on a random basis.
- Contest terms and conditions must be clearly presented or be made accessible to users prior to contest entry

In instances where prizes awarded for a contest are age-restricted (e.g. lottery tickets), an age verification mechanism must be included in order for the end user to be entered for a chance to win. Refer to 3.5.4.3 Age-restricted content for age verification requirement details.

Organizations running contests are also encouraged to refer to the following governmental guidelines:

- [Competition Bureau Enforcement Guidelines for Promotional Contests](#)

3.5.2 Multimedia messaging service (MMS) programs

Any CSC program involving the sending or receiving of multimedia content (e.g., photos, images, videos, animations) is considered an MMS program. Possible MMS use cases include:

- Mobile tickets
- Product registrations
- Mobile flyers
- Contests
- Promotional offers or coupons
- Insurance claims
- Non-emergency community reporting (e.g., vandalism)

All MMS programs must adhere to the same guidelines and policies as SMS programs as set out in this document, including consent for opt-in. Additionally:

1. The application for an MMS program must include detailed forecasts/estimates about the number of MMS messages per month, file sizes, and file formats.
2. Because MMS programs by nature consume data, they may not be considered truly free and therefore cannot be run using a free-to-end-user Short Code.
3. All MMS programs must disclose that “std msg & data rates may apply” or “msg & data rates may apply”.
4. Unless explicitly approved by the SCC, no MMS program may be used for
 - Age-restricted content
 - Wireless carrier-specific promotions or offerings

These MMS guidelines apply only to wireless carriers that support MMS programs (as indicated in writing to the Association). For a list of wireless carriers that currently support MMS over CSC, please visit www.txt.ca.

Additional considerations for MMS programs

- Some wireless carriers may have a multimedia messaging service centre (MMSC) through which MMS programs are provisioned. In these cases, content providers or aggregators must have an established connection with the MMSC before applying for an MMS program.
- Wireless carrier provisioning timelines and fees for MMS programs may differ from those for SMS programs.
- If an active SMS Short Code program is being amended to include MMS, reprovisioning may be required.
- MMS functionality is handset dependent. Not all devices can support MMS or have the same MMS capabilities (e.g., older devices may not be able to support GIFs or high-resolution images). This is not a wireless carrier limitation and should not be considered as such.
- Short Code throughput for MMS programs is different from that of SMS programs. To avoid undue network congestion, some wireless carriers may limit MMS throughput or implement specific MMS frequency requirements. Aggregators should send MMS messaging in a measured fashion to avoid delays (e.g., if 100 MMS messages are to be sent out, they may need to be sent at a lower rate, such as one message per second).

For more information on wireless carrier-specific requirements for MMS programs, content providers should contact their aggregator.

3.5.3 Charitable donation programs

Programs involving the solicitation of credit card (or PayPal) donations to qualified charities or non-profits may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Mobile Giving Foundation Canada enables the use of CSCs for carrier-billed donations to qualified charities. All charitable donation programs that use CSCs must be fully compliant with the policies and requirements set out in this document. For more information about running charitable donation programs, contact the Mobile Giving Foundation Canada.

3.5.4 Special use cases

Some CSC program types, such as those described within this section, require special consideration from the SCC and may be subject to additional requirements or best practices to ensure a positive user experience. They must be explicitly approved by the SCC on a case-by-case basis.

Due to the sensitive nature of programs in this category, violation of the guidelines outlined below will result in immediate review and possible revocation of the Short Code in question. For more information on these special use cases, email shortcodes@canadatelecoms.ca or call 613-233-4888 to speak with a member of the Association's Short Code Team.

3.5.4.1 Shared Common-Use Short Codes

A Shared Common-Use Short Code is a CSC program tied to a single aggregator or ASP that has received approval from the wireless carriers to share the CSC with multiple brands for a common use case (e.g., HR recruitment solutions, surveys, 2FA).

Any material change in the operation of an approved Shared Common-Use Short Code program requires the submission of a revised application form and the explicit approval of the wireless carriers. Material changes include:

- Adding an additional program type
- Changing an existing program type
- Changing the scope of the overall program so it differs from how it was originally approved

Shared Common-Use Short Code programs are subject to all the policies and requirements set out in this document. Additionally:

1. Access to send messages must be limited and appropriate safeguards must be implemented to mitigate unapproved use of the CSC.
2. All programs using the same CSC must have the same price point.
3. The aggregator or content provider is responsible for providing customer service related to the mandatory keywords and other applicable messages.
4. Unless specifically approved by the wireless carriers, Shared Common-Use Short Codes must not be used for:
 - Premium-rate content
 - Programs with an explicit or implicit guarantee that a text message will be delivered
 - Promotion or endorsement of an individual wireless carrier
 - Age-restricted content
 - Multiple unrelated use cases
 - Open access through a self-serve messaging model or free trial

3.5.4.2 Time-sensitive and critical communications

Time-sensitive notifications and critical communications, such as breaking news, stocks, or urgent safety-related alerts, must be administered with careful consideration as message delivery cannot be guaranteed.

When sending these types of notifications:

- Each message must include a timestamp.
- Language must be included at the point of opt-in, or in the terms and conditions, to inform the consumer that message delivery cannot be guaranteed.

When a CSC program is used to deliver imminent, safety-related messages, the content must be managed by a designated safety management individual (or individuals) to advise on the situation and reinforce safety protocols such as evacuation procedures.

In addition, time-sensitive and critical communications CSC programs must:

- Not be used to send urgent alerts unless they are relevant only to a specific individual, household, or localized community (such as a school or office building).

- Not be used to send “Broadcast Immediate” alerts, which may be issued only by designated provincial, territorial, or federal authorities, or those otherwise approved for connection to Canada’s national wireless public alerting system.
- Not use the word “emergency” in any advertisement, promotion, or call to action so as to not to be confused with Canada’s national wireless public alerting system
- Not be the only method of alerting the community; a secondary method of communication (e.g., email, push notification, voice) should be obtained at the time of opt-in
- State in their terms and conditions that alerts sent over the wireless public alerting system are to take precedence over any notifications sent via CSC

Examples of time-sensitive, critical communication use cases:

The smoke detector in your home has been activated and your home security provider notifies you of this via SMS and email. This would be considered a threat to property but would not trigger a wireless public alert.

A minor spill of a hazardous material that will not affect the surrounding community has occurred in a university lab, and evacuation of the lab and neighbouring labs is required.

3.5.4.3 Age-restricted content

Age-restricted or mature content, such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, gambling, or sexually explicit content, is not typically delivered through a CSC program, but may be approved on a case-by-case basis. Explicit approval for these programs is required.

Note that wireless carrier approval of a CSC program does not guarantee compliance with the law. It is the sole responsibility of the content provider to ensure all applicable provincial, territorial, and federal legislation is adhered to.

Unless otherwise explicitly approved, the promotion and marketing of age-restricted products or services is not permitted via CSC. However, possible use cases may include:

- Informational alerts confirming online orders or purchases
- Order pick-up or delivery confirmation
- Multi-factor authentication or one-time passcodes for ID validation

All age-restricted programs must comply with all policies and requirements set out in this document. Additionally, all CSC programs involving age-restricted content must have an age-verification mechanism in place that requires the consumer to enter their date of birth. Age verification can be achieved in the following ways:

- By using the CSC program (e.g., “Reply with your DOB (MM/DD/YYYY) to continue”)
- If the promotion of the program is limited to age-verified locations such as a bar
- If a linked webpage is age-gated

3.5.4.3.1 Lotteries and raffles

CSC programs where there is a minimum age of participation to purchase a ticket for a chance to win money or a prize (e.g. 50/50 raffles, charity sweepstakes) fall under the lotteries and raffles category. Lotteries and raffles are governed provincially and adherence to all applicable provincial laws and regulations is required at all times. These programs may be considered on a case-by-case basis and requires explicit approval from the wireless carriers.

Possible use cases include:

- Promotional alerts related to upcoming campaigns and draws
- Informational updates regarding deadlines, prizes, or winners
- Multi-factor authentication for account recovery or password reset

Lottery and raffle programs are age-restricted and are required to validate the end user's age by:

- End user entering their full date of birth online upon ticket purchase or account creation
- By using the CSC program to validate age (e.g., "Reply with your DOB (MM/DD/YYYY) to continue").

All age verification mechanisms must require that the end user enter their date of birth.

3.5.4.4 Purchased and third party debt collection

CSC programs may be used to communicate about outstanding debt owed to a creditor. There are two types of debt collection that require special consideration:

- Purchased debt collection: debt that has been sold from the original creditor to a third party that is now trying to collect from a consumer with whom there is no pre-existing relationship.
- Third party debt collection: also referred to as "debt collection on behalf of" refers to unsettled debts or delinquent accounts that are being managed by a third party on behalf of the original creditor, with whom there is a pre-existing relationship with the consumer.

Programs involving **purchased or third party debt collection** may be considered on a case-by-case basis and requires explicit approval from the wireless carriers.

For these types of programs, content providers must be informed of each province and territory's debt collection regulations. Additionally, content providers must provide the following details as part of their CSC application submission:

- A sample letter that would be sent to the consumer disclosing the relationship between the original creditor and the debt collector.
- Sample messages that include a phone number, email, or URL that can be safely vetted and validated online.
- For purchased debt collection, the name of the collection agency must be stated in all messaging.
- For third party debt collection, the name of the collection agency and the original creditor must be stated in all messaging.
- If implied consent is being requested, terms and conditions outlining the relationship between the creditor and consumer must be provided.
- The CSC application must clearly define the end-to-end communication process between the creditor or third party and the consumer.

For more information on the debt collection process in Canada please visit:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/financial-consumer-agency/services/debt/collection-agency.html>

3.5.4.5 Political messaging

A political messaging program is expected to involve:

- Solicitation of support of political candidates

- Information regarding a particular candidate's platform or goals if elected
- Donation solicitation or donation facilitation

Messages that are libelous, defamatory, or not in full compliance with applicable laws are prohibited. Messages that contain hate, violent or racist rhetoric or symbols, or material reasonably expected to be offensive to a user, without regard to ideological or partisan content, are also prohibited.

Opt-in and opt-out consent rules apply, so sharing of lists is not permitted.

3.5.4.6 Crypto currency

Crypto currency (e.g. Bitcoin and Ether) is an alternate form of digital currency that is not issued or controlled by the Canadian Government or financial institutions. A program involving crypto currency is expected to be used for the following use cases:

- Multi-factor authentication or one-time passcodes for account sign-up, password reset, etc.
- Informational alerts regarding transactions

Other program types may be considered by the wireless carriers on a case-by-case basis.

3.5.4.7 Corporate owned devices

In the case where employees are using corporate or company owned devices to engage with a CSC program, the content provider may leverage implied consent to deliver the program content to these devices, where individual opt-in or use of the handset verifier is not required. These programs may be considered on a case-by-case basis and requires explicit approval from the wireless carriers

Programs delivering content to corporate or company owned devices are expected to be used for the business-related use cases below:

- Employee shift/scheduling alerts
- Workplace related alerts (closures, health and safety, etc.)

Appendix A: Common terms and definitions

Aggregator: A third party that connects directly or indirectly to a wireless carrier network to offer services to consumers on behalf of a content provider.

Applicant: An organization that applies for a Common Short Code. The applicant must be listed in Section 1.1 of the Canadian Common Short Code Application Form.

Application service provider (ASP): An organization that offers network-based software solutions (applications) or downloadable applications that enable the business logic behind mobile marketing initiatives.

Call to action (CTA): The action a consumer is encouraged to take by program content or related advertisements in order to join or engage with the program, such as an opt-in keyword, re-opt-in keyword, or a mobile number entry field.

Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL): A law enacted by the Government of Canada to “promote the efficiency and adaptability of the Canadian economy by regulating certain activities that discourage reliance on electronic means of carrying out commercial activities, and to amend the *Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Act*, the *Competition Act*, the *Personal Information and Electronic Documents Act*, and the *Telecommunications Act*.”

For a copy of CASL, as well as other CRTC and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada regulations, see <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canada-anti-spam-legislation/en>

Commercial electronic message (CEM): An electronic message that encourages a recipient to engage in a commercial activity, whether or not there is any expectation of profit.

Common Short Code (CSC): A three- to six-digit number that replaces a traditional telephone number for the purposes of sending SMS or MMS content to a consumer. CSCs can be activated on most or all mobile phone networks for the same application or service.

Consumer: Any individual who obtains mobile phone services from a wireless carrier.

Content provider: A third party that offers service, via a Common Short Code, to consumers.

Contest element: A CSC program where either the content is a contest or the content is promoted as part of a contest. Content providers running contests must abide by [Section 74.06 of the Competition Act](#) and [Section 206 of the Criminal Code of Canada](#).

Direct carrier billing (DCB): A billing integration method where the consumer is charged directly to their mobile phone bill via payment solution in a browser or mobile application. Mobile originating and mobile terminating messages are still required; however, they are used solely for handset verification and purchase confirmation, with no additional charges attached to them.

Mobile commerce: Applications that enable consumers to conduct various transactions using their mobile devices, such as payments, banking, offers, and event ticketing.

Mobile originating (MO): A message sent by the consumer.

Mobile Station International Subscriber Directory Number (MSISDN): The unique number that identifies a mobile subscriber. More commonly referred to as a wireless phone number or mobile number.

Mobile terminating (MT): A message received by, or sent to, the consumer.

Multimedia messaging service (MMS): A standard for mobile messaging systems that enables sending of multimedia -based messages, such as images, audio, and video files. MMS messages may also include only text.

Premium short messaging service (SMS): An SMS program that carries a premium price point that is charged to the consumer's cellphone bill. A premium price point is any amount charged to the consumer that exceeds the cost charged by their wireless carrier to send a regular, standard-rate text message.

Private codes: Short Codes specific to a wireless carrier. These codes are not available for common use and are not administered by the Association.

Program: A messaging experience offered by a brand or content provider that uses Common Short Codes to transmit messages between wireless carriers and end users.

Rich content: Downloadable multimedia content such as ringtones, images, graphics, or games.

Short Code Council (SCC): A council of the Canadian Telecommunications Association consisting of one voting representative from each participating wireless carrier.

Short message peer-to-peer protocol (SMPP): A protocol that defines the language used by servers that host short messaging service applications and the operators' short message service centres to enable two-way messaging.

Short messaging service (SMS): A standard for mobile messaging systems that enables sending text-based messages between mobile devices.

Spam: Any commercial electronic message sent without the consent of the recipient. For the purposes of administering these guidelines, the Short Code Council reserves the right to determine what is considered spam.

Subscription program: Any CSC program that delivers content to a consumer on an ongoing basis. These services are opt-in, and consumers may opt out at any time. The cost and frequency of messaging depend on the service.

Wireless carrier: A company that provides access to wireless communications services, such as SMS, MMS, and RCS to their customer, the consumer.

Appendix B: Compliance policies for premium-rate programs

Premium rate programs (which can include premium SMS, direct carrier billing, rich content, and mobile commerce) are not typically run over CSCs. Any new request for a premium rate program will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the wireless carriers. **Explicit approval is required.** For more information, please contact shortcodes@canadatelecoms.ca.

In addition to all policies set out in [Section 3](#) of this document, premium-rate CSC programs are also subject to the following requirements.

B1. Consent

All premium-rate programs, whether subscription or non-subscription, require a double opt-in in the form of an affirmative action by the consumer to acknowledge the terms of the subscription service. Double opt-in is required regardless of the method used by the consumer to subscribe to the program and is applicable the first time a consumer engages with a specific program or service. Separate programs offered on the same CSC require a separate double opt-in. The aggregator maintaining the direct connection to the wireless carrier networks is responsible for managing subscriber opt-in information, regardless of any other parties involved.

The following information must be included in the double opt-in message:

- Identification of the service as a subscription
- Pricing terms, message frequency, and billing interval
- Description of program type (chat, vote, alert, etc.)
- Contact details for the program sponsor, including at least one of the following:
 - Phone number (must be toll-free if no other method of contact is offered)
 - Website URL
 - Email address
- Instructions to end the service using the STOP or ARRET command
- Exact instructions for consumer action (e.g., “To accept reply YES”)

The only acceptable double opt-in method for a premium-rate program is for a consumer to reply to a message from the content provider with the keyword “YES” or “OUI”. Double opt-in methods using consumer-entered PINs are not permitted. In addition:

- The wording surrounding the prescribed keyword must be “To accept reply YES”.
- The double opt-in message is the only place where consumers may be requested to send the word YES to the CSC number. Content provider platforms must not accept any YES commands from a consumer before the double opt-in message has been successfully delivered to the consumer’s device.
- In all double opt-in messages, the pricing and terms information must come **before** the opt-in keyword.

The double opt-in process generally begins with one of two types of call to action and response:

- The consumer is asked to enter their mobile number online to subscribe to a premium alerts program. Once they enter their number and check the terms and conditions, they click “subscribe” to opt in to the program.

OR

- The consumer sees a print, web, or radio promotion that references a CSC program, then texts the appropriate keyword to the indicated number (e.g., “Text ASTRO to 23456, \$1.00/msg, 2 msgs/week. Msg&data rates may apply”).

From there, the process is the same:

	Sample text	Charge
Double opt-in message from content provider	Astro ABC subscription service \$1.00/msg, 2 msgs/week. To accept reply YES. To end txt STOP. Help 1-800-123-4567	Free
Consumer response	YES	Non-premium
Confirmation message from content provider	Thx! You’re subscribed to receive 2 msgs/week at \$1.00/msg. You will receive your first msg shortly. To stop txt STOP	Free

Unless the consumer texts STOP, delivery of the subscription content (at premium rates) may then begin.

B2. Pricing

The price of a CSC program’s content is determined by the content provider, subject to the wireless carriers’ approval and technical ability to charge the requested price. Common price points include:

- \$0.00
- \$0.15
- \$0.25
- \$0.50
- \$0.75
- \$1.00
- \$1.25
- \$1.50
- \$1.75
- \$2.00
- \$3.00
- \$4.00
- \$5.00
- \$10.00

While applicants may propose price points other than these, some wireless carriers may require longer lead times to accommodate other price points. Applicants must inform the wireless carriers of the proposed pricing, including their intent to use direct carrier billing vs. premium, as part of their applications.

Premium messages and associated charges must be spread evenly throughout each month so charges are not front-loaded.

B2.1 Spending caps

Consumer spending on subscription services must be capped at \$40 per month per consumer per CSC. The \$40 cap does not change regardless of how many services are running on the same CSC. Some wireless carriers may impose a \$40 monthly cap on all premium-rate CSC programs, whether subscription-based or not.

When applying to run voting programs, which can often become viral, applicants must propose a reasonable spending cap per voting program per consumer, subject to wireless carrier approval.

B3. Promotion and advertising

At all times, content providers must inform users of the cost of interacting with their program. Premium-rate programs are subject to the following requirements above and beyond the standard promotion and advertising requirements.

B3.1 Requirements for all forms of calls to action

The billing period and applicable cost must be disclosed using a dollar sign (\$). If it is not technically feasible to include the \$, the currency code “CAD” is acceptable. For example:

Acceptable	Not acceptable
“\$2/msg”	“2/msg”
“2 CAD/msg”	

Additionally, the term “subscription” and the frequency of message delivery must be disclosed for an ongoing service.

B3.2 Requirements for online advertising

The following requirements apply to online advertising and calls to action, including mobile websites:

1. If the signup process requires the consumer to visit multiple web pages, the cost for participating in the program must be clearly indicated on all pages throughout the process, including any pages not requesting consumer information.
2. Calls to action may not contain language or use tools (such as a countdown clock) that convey a sense of urgency about an offer or service.
3. The content provider must own and control the mobile phone number entry page for all online premium subscription registrations.
4. Pricing terms on CTAs on mobile websites must be disclosed above the “Buy” button (or similar wording, such as Accept, Purchase, Subscribe, etc.).
5. CTAs for premium subscription services where a consumer initially opts in by entering their mobile phone number online must include a terms and conditions checkbox. The checkbox must be directly below the phone number entry field, and it must disclose the following details:
 - The fact that the service is a subscription
 - Billing period
 - Applicable cost
 - Message frequency
 - Total monthly cost for participating in the program

For example:

“This is a subscription service where you receive 3 messages per week at \$5.00 per week (\$20 per month). Please check to accept.”

If the service may include months that do not conform to the standard cost equation (e.g., one month that includes 5 billable messages per week), the terms and conditions must disclose what the cost will be for these months.

All terms and conditions text must be visible and legible to the consumer, and the checkbox may not be pre-checked.

Because of the small screen size of some mobile devices, content providers may use a pop-up window instead of a checkbox for CTAs on mobile websites. This pop-up window must appear after the consumer enters their phone number and proceeds to the next page. It must contain all the information indicated above and must include clearly labelled buttons to accept or decline the terms and conditions.

B3.3 Requirements for the use of premium SMS

The actual nature of premium CSC programs may not be obscured by unrelated material or presented as something other than what it is. All advertising, positioning, and promotion of premium SMS programs, including affiliate advertising and associated websites, must clearly highlight the content the subscriber will receive and the associated terms distinctly from any marketing activity or incentive that encourages the consumer to subscribe.

B4. Requirements for specific types of premium CSC programs

In addition to adhering to all policies related to standard and premium programs as indicated above and in Section 3, the following types of premium programs are also subject to additional requirements.

B4.1 Contests

Premium-rate CSC programs with contest elements must comply with all policies governing standard-rate contest programs as set out in [Section 3.5.1](#) of this document. In addition:

- All premium contest programs must offer a minimum prize value of \$500 per month of the contest term (e.g., for a six-month contest term, the prize must be valued at a minimum of \$3,000).
- Calls to action may not use wording that conveys or implies a false guarantee of prize or reward (e.g., “already a winner”, “today’s winner”, “selected to win”, “enter phone number to claim prize”, etc.).

B4.1.1 Additional chances to win

If a contest program will include additional chances to win at a premium rate, this must be disclosed in the initial CSC program application.

For these programs, after a consumer enters the contest, the confirmation message may include a call to action for an additional chance to win. This message must include the additional pricing terms and opt-out information. The consumer must reply to this message with the prescribed keyword indicating that they want to play again before any additional charges may be incurred.

Example message text:

Congratulations u’r entered in the draw! Want 1 more chance to win? \$2 per entry. Reply YES to play again! To end txt STOP

B4.2 Premium chat programs

There are two types of chat programs:

- **Peer-to-peer**, where the interaction is between two individuals, neither of whom is a “chat professional”. For these programs:
 - Per-message charges should be applied to messages sent, not those received. This minimizes the likelihood of one participant sending large numbers of messages to the other.
 - Consumers should have the ability to block content from a specific consumer. The block function should be reversible.
- **Operator-assisted**, where a consumer interacts with a paid “chat professional”. For these programs:
 - Messages must be limited to a 1:1 ratio unless otherwise approved.
 - The “chat professional” is expected to conform to their own industry best practices.

For all chat programs, administrative messages associated with opting in and setting up profiles should not incur premium charges unless necessary. If premium charges will be incurred as part of the registration process, this must be made clear in the call to action.

All chat programs must include an age verification mechanism to ensure the content of the chat is appropriate to the consumer’s age. The verification must require the consumer to confirm their age by providing their birthdate or age, or by replying YES to a message asking if they are past a certain age.

If any aspect of a chat program includes a subscription element, all subscription program policies must be complied with. For example, if a match or profile notification subscription service is offered at a premium over and above the initial agreed-upon terms, an additional opt-in must be obtained from the subscriber.

Wireless carriers may, on a case-by-case basis, request that a monthly spending cap be implemented for chat programs. Chat program operators should contact their aggregator for specific information on each wireless carrier’s policies.

Appendix C: Document Version History

Version No.	Date Modified	Description of Modification
2	09/11/2025	<p>1.1 1.: Added “Phishing” to prohibited content.</p> <p>1.1 9.: Added that if a phone number is the only method of contact, it must be a toll-free number.</p> <p>2.: Updated to include 3-digit CSC numbers.</p> <p>2.3: Added details about the CSC application, revision, and deposit processes.</p> <p>3.1: Added that consent is limited to the program use case.</p> <p>3.1.6: New section - added details for subscription and non-subscription programs.</p> <p>3.1.6.1: Added program/brand name as a requirement for handset verifiers. Added details for MO opt-ins.</p> <p>3.1.6.2: Added program/brand name as a requirement for the first message for session/event-based alerts programs.</p> <p>3.1.6.3: New section - added details for one-time use programs.</p> <p>3.1.8: Added recommended opt-out threshold and requirements for blacklisting via STOP/ARRET.</p> <p>3.2.1: Added details for transitioning consumers to RBM from an initial SMS opt-in.</p> <p>3.2.2: Added that if a phone number is the only method of contact, it must be a toll-free number. Added that customers must be able to reengage with a CSC program after opting out.</p> <p>3.2.3: Added that URLs and email addresses within a message must be active.</p> <p>3.4.2.1: Added that users must be informed of what they are signing up for when providing a mobile number for opt-in.</p> <p>3.4.2.2: Added that checkboxes to provide express consent must not be prechecked.</p> <p>3.5.1: Added additional requirements for contest programs.</p> <p>3.5.4.3: Added requirement for age-verification mechanisms to confirm the end user’s date of birth.</p> <p>3.5.4.3.1: New section - added details and requirements for lottery and raffle programs.</p> <p>3.5.4.4: Added details and requirements for purchased and third-party debt collection programs.</p> <p>3.5.4.6: New section - added details for programs involving crypto currency.</p> <p>3.5.4.7: New section - added details for programs with corporate owned devices.</p> <p>Appendix A: Updated call to action definition.</p>
2.1	01/09/2026	<p>Appendix B: Removed section B4.1.1 “Contests in Québec” - no longer applicable.</p>