



## A NEW VISION OF AGING FOR CANADA

December 13, 2012

Chris Seidl,  
Executive Director, Telecommunications Directorate  
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière  
Central Building  
1 Promenade du Portage  
Gatineau, Quebec J8X 4B1

Dear Mr. Seidl,

CARP appreciates your recent letter to Bell Canada concerning customer complaints against charges of \$2 per month for paper bills. Your letter brings needed attention to an issue of increasing importance.

The vast majority of CARP members (75% of 4,700 respondents) who responded to a July 2012 CARP Poll™ reject the fees for paper bills – both on behalf of those who can't afford it or don't want to handle their affairs online – but also on principle. The vast majority would move their business but in most cases, they can't because these companies have territorial exclusivity or it would mean disrupting all their personal arrangements. On the basis of CARP members' overwhelming rejection of the billing policies, CARP is calling on telecommunications companies to reverse their current policy of charging extra fees for a paper bill if the customers do not switch to an online bill.

CARP issued a press release in November calling for the reversal in policy and followed up with letters to Bell, Rogers, and Telus, asking the companies to reverse the billing policies or make credible exceptions for consumers who cannot or choose not to switch to online billing. We have received responses from Bell and TELUS informing us that to avoid the charge, customers need individually to call and request that the charge be waived for reasons of hardship.

Such a response is an inadequate. Seniors on a fixed income, not online, or uncomfortable with online commerce are doubly disadvantaged by such billing practices. They will now have to pay up to a hundred dollars or more each year just for access to paper bills, the only billing method which many seniors are able to or comfortable with using. Having to plead for individual relief is an unfair expectation.

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**B**ENEFITS

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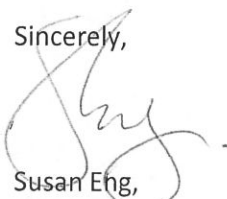
30 JEFFERSON AVENUE, TORONTO, ON M6K 1Y4 • TEL 416 363 2277 • FAX 416 363 8747 • TOLL-FREE 1 888 363 2279

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The response from the various companies, both directly to us and reported through the media, indicate strongly that the companies do not intend to change or even review their current policy. We anticipate that if these advance policies, covering some services, are not resisted, then other companies will follow suit and the changes will extend to other services. We are especially concerned about land lines, which are treated as essential services by many, especially seniors. They are not affected at present, but in our conversation with Bell Canada, no assurances could be given that they would be protected in the future. Utility companies have not started this practice but may well follow suit.

Consequently, CARP is pleased by the CRTC's letter to Bell and we look forward to Bell Canada's December 19<sup>th</sup> formal response. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,



Susan Eng,  
Vice President, CARP Advocacy

Links to Supporting Material:

CARP Poll:

<http://www.carp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Senior-Discounts-reportNEW.pdf>

CARP Press Release:

<http://www.carp.ca/2012/11/07/54211/>

CARP Letters:

<http://www.carp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Letters-Paper-Bill-Charges-Nov-2012.pdf>