



Telecom Order CRTC 2013-253

PDF version

Ottawa, 21 May 2013

Northwestel Inc. – Withdrawal of Manual Mobile Service

File number: Tariff Notice 892

1. The Commission received an application from Northwestel Inc. (Northwestel), dated 4 February 2013, in which the company proposed to withdraw its Manual Mobile Service (MMS) from 26 of the 71 service areas where it is currently offered.¹ This service allows customers to make telephone calls from fixed or mobile radios via an operator.
2. Northwestel also proposed housekeeping changes to its tariffs to correct misspellings and implement name changes for two service areas.
3. Northwestel requested an effective date of 1 July 2013, submitting that this would allow affected customers sufficient time to switch to alternative services, if required.
4. The company submitted that the equipment used to support MMS was discontinued by the manufacturer more than 15 years ago, and replacement parts are no longer produced. Consequently, it has become increasingly difficult for the company to repair and maintain the service. Northwestel noted that it will use parts from the dismantled sites to maintain service in the near term at the remaining 45 service areas. The company also submitted that its customers' use of MMS has declined significantly over the last 10 years.
5. Northwestel submitted that there are reasonable alternatives to MMS, such as satellite phone service, which is available throughout its operating area. It added that cellular services are also available at a number of the service areas.
6. The company stated that, to help mitigate the cost to customers of moving to an alternative service, it planned to offer fixed MMS customers at the affected service areas one of the following:
 - a construction contribution of up to \$2,000 for phone access service that meets the Commission's basic service objective;
 - reimbursement of cellular handset costs (up to \$500); or
 - reimbursement of satellite phone handset costs (up to \$2,000).

¹ See the Appendix for a list of the proposed service areas.

7. In addition, Northwestel proposed to fully reimburse customers who are affected by the service withdrawal for the purchase of a new MMS radio telephone set, if that purchase was made between 1 February 2012 and 1 February 2013.
8. The company stated that it was notifying all affected customers of its proposal by letter, and that it would also notify customers if its proposal is approved. In addition, Northwestel noted that its customer service representatives would call customers whose services are affected by the proposal.
9. The Commission did not receive any comments regarding Northwestel's application. The public record of this proceeding, which closed on 18 March 2013, is available on the Commission's website at www.crtc.gc.ca under "Public Proceedings" or by using the file number provided above.

Commission's analysis and determinations

10. The Commission considers that Northwestel's application meets the requirements set out in *Mandatory customer contract renewal notification and requirements for service destandardization/withdrawal*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2008-22, 6 March 2008, in which the Commission revised its procedures for dealing with applications to destandardize and/or withdraw tariffed services. In particular, the Commission notes that Northwestel has informed affected customers of the proposed withdrawal, including how they may file comments with the Commission.
11. The Commission also considers Northwestel's proposed housekeeping changes to be reasonable.
12. In light of the above, the Commission **approves** Northwestel's application.

Secretary General

Service areas from which Northwestel proposed to withdraw MMS

British Columbia

Atick Creek
Cassiar
Chicken
Fort Nelson
Hyland River
Minaker River
Steamboat
Tsinhia
Wonowon

Northwest Territories

Edzo
Fort Good Hope
Fort Providence
Parsons
Pointed Mountain
Snare
Wrigley
Yellowknife

Yukon Territory

Distincta Peak
Fox
Laberge
McAvoy Lake
Mickey
Rancheria
Ross River
White Mountain
Whitehorse