



Telecom Order CRTC 2024-146

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Ottawa, 28 June 2024

Public record: Tariff Notice 379

Saskatchewan Telecommunications – Tariff Notice 379 – Destandardization and withdrawal of the Intercom feature for SmartTouch Subscription Service

Summary

The Commission approves Saskatchewan Telecommunications' (SaskTel) application to destandardize and withdraw the Intercom feature of its SmartTouch Subscription Service, effective **28 June 2024**.

The Commission directs SaskTel to inform those customers who will still be able to use the Intercom feature until it is decommissioned that they can continue to do so, even though they will no longer be billed for the service.

Application

1. On 1 March 2024, the Commission received an application from Saskatchewan Telecommunications (SaskTel), Tariff Notice (TN) 379. The company proposed changes to item 150.15 of its General Tariff, SmartTouch Subscription Service. Specifically, the company applied to partially destandardize and partially withdraw the Intercom feature.
2. For customers whose telephone service is provided entirely via traditional copper technology, SaskTel proposed to destandardize the Intercom feature. This means that while the service would not be available to new customers, existing customers would be able to continue to use the feature, but no additions, moves, changes, or new installations would be allowed. For customers whose telephone service is not completely provided via traditional copper technology, SaskTel proposed to withdraw the Intercom feature.
3. SaskTel submitted that the technology that supports the Intercom feature is at the end of its lifespan. It no longer functions as intended on broadband line gateway (BBLG) or fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) lines.¹ In addition, a recent voice switch upgrade has

¹ BBLG technology allows copper loops in a given switching centre to be connected to SaskTel's growth switching technology over fibre transport, while FTTP provides a complete fibre path to an end-user's premises.

resulted in the Intercom feature being unsupported on Voice over Internet Protocol lines.

4. SaskTel submitted that, while it cannot provide an alternative that works in the same way as the Intercom feature, the proliferation of wireless devices, such as cell phones, Wi-Fi-enabled devices, and walkie-talkies, means that customers have many options.
5. SaskTel provided copies of the notice that it sent to all affected customers to let them know about its application to withdraw the Intercom service. It informed customers that, if the withdrawal were approved, the Intercom feature would be discontinued and the related \$5-per-month charge would be removed from their account on 31 May 2024.
6. SaskTel requested an effective date of 31 May 2024.
7. The Commission received an intervention regarding SaskTel's application.

Intervention

8. The intervener wanted to keep the Intercom feature, indicating that their farm home and farm shop are on the same property and have the same telephone line. They added that the Intercom feature is used to communicate between the two buildings. As a solution, SaskTel proposed to issue another phone number, but the intervener submitted that this would be more expensive.

SaskTel's reply

9. SaskTel indicated that, in the intervener's case, the line is connected to BBLG technology, which allows copper loops in a given switching centre to be connected to SaskTel's fibre transport. That means that the Intercom feature would no longer function as intended. In addition, BBLG has been discontinued by the manufacturer and is no longer supported.
10. SaskTel added that the Intercom feature might continue to function after support for the feature has been withdrawn. Should this be the case, the intervener would be able to continue to use the feature but would no longer be billed for it. However, SaskTel could not guarantee for how long it would continue to work.
11. SaskTel pointed out that many retailers offer, at reasonable prices, portable two-way radios that should provide equivalent functionality, or even be an improvement due to portability. Telephone sets with an intercom feature are also available, though not from SaskTel.

Commission's analysis

12. Telecom Information Bulletin 2010-455-1 sets out the requirements for the destandardization and withdrawal of tariffed services. In accordance with those requirements, SaskTel has informed affected customers of its proposal to

destandardize and withdraw the Intercom feature, provided in confidence the number of customers who would be affected, and provided a rationale for its proposal.

13. The Commission acknowledges that the proposed change is triggered by the fact that the Intercom feature is at the end of its lifespan.
14. The Commission notes that, since 2014, SaskTel's General Tariff has indicated that SmartTouch services such as the Intercom feature are provided subject to the availability of suitable facilities and equipment. Thus, customers have already been informed that SmartTouch services might not be available.
15. The Commission notes that it eliminated the requirement to identify a reasonable substitute for a withdrawn service in Telecom Decision 2008-22. Nevertheless, SaskTel has identified substitutes to the Intercom feature.
16. In its reply to the intervener, SaskTel indicated that the Intercom feature might continue to function after support has been withdrawn. If so, customers could continue to use the feature without being billed for it. The Commission considers that SaskTel should notify those customers who will still have access to the service of this fact, as it was not mentioned in the notices that were sent.
17. The Commission considers it unlikely that the continued availability of the feature, free of charge for an unknown period of time, would have an impact on competition because the service is not offered to new customers and will eventually stop working.

Conclusion

18. In light of the above, Commission approves the application.
19. In addition, the Commission directs SaskTel to inform those customers who will still be able to use the Intercom feature until it is decommissioned that they can continue to do so, even though they will no longer be billed for the service.

Secretary General

Related documents

- *Approval processes for tariff applications and intercarrier agreements*, Telecom Information Bulletin CRTC 2010-455-1, 19 February 2016
- *Mandatory customer contract renewal notification and requirements for service destandardization/withdrawal*, Telecom Decision CRTC 2008-22, 6 March 2008