



Telecom Order CRTC 2005-372

Ottawa, 18 November 2005

Saskatchewan Telecommunications Inc.

Reference: Tariff Notice 93

Withdrawal of Reminder Service

The application

1. The Commission received an application by Saskatchewan Telecommunications Inc. (SaskTel), dated 19 August 2005, under Tariff Notice 93 (TN 93), proposing revisions to its General Tariff to destandardize and withdraw Reminder Service, a non-subscription pay-per-use service, priced at \$2.00 per call, used by customers requesting a wake-up/reminder call.
2. SaskTel indicated that Reminder Service was provided by operators, using the Digital Operator Toll System (DOTS) platform whose main function was to provision and bill General Mobile Telephone Service (GMTS). SaskTel noted that it was no longer offering GMTS. SaskTel indicated that the DOTS system was unreliable, obsolete and manufacturer discontinued and that the service agreement with TI Labs, the equipment vendor, had expired and that TI Labs no longer existed.
3. According to SaskTel, usage of Reminder Service had decreased from 132,000 calls per year in 2000 to 50,500 calls in 2004. SaskTel noted that a survey done in August and September 2004 showed that there were 985 and 892 first-time callers, an average of 133 calls per day, and overall, 24 customers who used the service more than 20 times per month.
4. As an alternative to the Reminder Service, SaskTel proposed that its customers use MessageManager's Out Call Notification feature. SaskTel noted that MessageManager service was \$5.95 per month, which included the cost of the Out Call Notification.
5. SaskTel submitted that 30 percent of customers using Reminder Service made three or more requests per month at \$2.00 per call, which would cover the price of MessageManager service. SaskTel noted that of the customers making three or more requests per month, 30 percent of them already subscribed to MessageManager service.
6. SaskTel indicated that there were other options available to customers, such as telephone answering services, alarm clocks, and the alarm feature available on most digital cellular telephones.
7. SaskTel noted that there are only four northern locations in Saskatchewan that do not have access to MessageManager service: Stony Rapids, Black Lake, Uranium City and Fond du Lac. SaskTel submitted that of the Reminder Service customers in these areas, most were one-time users, with three times being the most the service was used in one month.

8. SaskTel proposed to withdraw the service on 26 November 2005, which would allow customers over three months from the date of its application to find an alternative to Reminder Service. In its application, SaskTel included a copy of the notice, dated 19 August 2005, that it sent to customers who used Reminder Service from May through July 2005, informing them of its application.

Process

9. On 23 August 2005, the Commission received comments from Leslie Boschamn-Selin and from Janice and Todd Peterson. SaskTel filed reply comments on 2 September 2005.

Comments

10. Leslie Boschamn-Selin submitted that she used the wake-up service at least four times per year and appreciated being put through to special services to talk to a person.
11. Todd Peterson indicated that he and his family have used the service periodically for over 30 years and that the service has been reliable and helpful. Mr. Peterson also indicated that the letter he received from SaskTel explained the reasons for exiting the service to his satisfaction. Mr. Peterson questioned whether it was Commission policy to require SaskTel to inform each customer individually of the withdrawal of the service.

Reply comments

12. SaskTel noted that in accordance with *New procedures for disposition of applications dealing with the destandardization and/or withdrawal of tariffed services*, Telecom Circular CRTC 2005-7, 30 May 2005 (Circular 2005-7), it was obligated to inform customers when a service was to be destandardized and/or withdrawn. SaskTel stated that in this particular application to withdraw Reminder Service, it had determined that a letter to each customer was the best option.

Commission's analysis and determinations

13. The Commission notes that SaskTel proposed to withdraw Reminder Service because the DOTS system which was used to provide the service was unreliable, obsolete and manufacturer discontinued. SaskTel also noted that the service agreement with TI Labs, the equipment vendor, had expired and that TI Labs no longer existed.
14. In Circular 2005-7, the Commission noted that in assessing an application for destandardization and/or withdrawal, it would examine whether the applicant had met the following criteria:
 - a) that there is a reasonable substitute for the service being destandardized and/or withdrawn;

- b) that there is a clear transition plan including sufficient time to allow customers to make plans to replace the service in question; and
 - c) that affected customers are given adequate notice to enable them to participate meaningfully in the Commission's process.
15. In Circular 2005-7, the Commission noted that, when determining whether a reasonable substitute for the service in question existed, it would examine the following factors: functionality of the substitute service, availability of the substitute service in the same geographical area, and cost of the substitute service (including the initial outlay and ongoing costs to the customer).
 16. The Commission notes that SaskTel proposed MessageManager's Out Call Notification feature as an alternative to Reminder Service. MessageManager service is available for \$5.95 per month. The Commission notes that there is a \$9.00 service charge to subscribe to MessageManager service.
 17. Based on SaskTel's evidence, 30 percent of customers using Reminder Service made three or more requests per month at \$2.00 per call, which would cover the price of MessageManager service at \$5.95 per month. SaskTel also noted that 30 percent of the customers who made three or more requests per month already subscribed to MessageManager service.
 18. With respect to the users of Reminder Service with less than three calls per month, the Commission is of the view that the \$5.95 per month for MessageManager service is not onerous. Further, the Commission notes that withdrawal of Reminder Service will not result in stranded investment for customers as they did not have to buy equipment because Reminder Service is a call-in pay-per-use service.
 19. The Commission notes there are four northern locations in Saskatchewan that do not have access to MessageManager service, but according to SaskTel, the Reminder Service customers in these areas are mostly one-time users, with three times being the most the service was used in one month. The Commission is of the view that there are other options available for customers in these areas such as alarm clocks, and the alarm feature available on most digital cellular telephones.
 20. The Commission considers that the four alternatives to Reminder Service proposed by SaskTel are reasonable. SaskTel proposed MessageManager's Out Call Notification feature, telephone answering services, alarm clocks, and the alarm feature available on most digital cellular telephones.
 21. With respect to the requirement for a clear transition plan, the Commission notes that SaskTel proposed a transition period of over three months from 19 August 2005 to allow customers to find an alternative for Reminder Service. The Commission considers that three months is sufficient time to consider the four alternatives mentioned above and to find a replacement service.

22. With respect to customers receiving adequate notice, the Commission notes that on 19 August 2005, the same day that the company filed its application, SaskTel sent a notice to all customers who had used Reminder Service from 1 May to 31 July 2005. The notice set out the following information: the proposed withdrawal of Reminder Service as of 26 November 2005; the rationale for the withdrawal; the alternatives available; and the Commission's address to which questions or concerns could be directed. The Commission considers that customers were given proper notice.
23. In light of the above, the Commission **approves** TN 93. The revisions take effect as of 26 November 2005.

Secretary General

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