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News

Northwestel loses monopoly on phone service in the North



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Wednesday, December 14, 2011 - 5:18 PM

Yellowknife, N.W.T. - Northwestel's monopoly on local phone service in the North will come to an end on May 1st of next year.

After holding a hearing on competition in October, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, released its decision today.

Leonard Katz, the regulator's vice chair of communications, explained why they are opening the market to local competition.

"Competition is healthy for Canadians anywhere in the country. Competition stimulates innovation and allows for the introduction of new services, provides Canadians with choice, and also competes on price as well. And so we're a strong proponent of competition."

On top of that decision, the CRTC also denied Northwestel's request for a \$2 rate increase.

Katz said they're disappointed in the service the company is providing in the North.

"We heard during the hearing that many of their customers were unhappy with the level of service they were getting. In fact, we heard from all three territorial governments who all had comments with regard to the lack of new technology."

Katz said Northwestel generated \$225 million in revenues last year and the company should've taken the initiative to invest in their systems.

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"They generated \$225 million of revenue and had income of roughly \$69 million. We felt some of that money should have been invested in network infrastructure and upgrading and updating their network."



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The CRTC has also ordered NorthwesTel to provide them with a plan, detailing how it will modernize its network in the North.

A rep for the company said they're still reviewing the decision, and will comment at a later date.



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