

## Telus says it's still working on dropping extra charge following CRTC ruling

**BY FIONA ANDERSON**

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VANCOUVER - Some Telus customers are still being charged \$2.95 for not having a Telus long-distance plan, despite a ruling last month from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission calling the charge unauthorized.

But the hold-up is just a matter of figuring out how to implement a new billing system that can accommodate the decision, Telus spokesman Shawn Hall said. And Telus has a team working on that.

"The change is not trivial, so it will take us some time to implement this," Hall said.

The CRTC had ordered the Vancouver-based telecom giant to refund customers who haven't used Telus long distance.

People who are entitled to a refund should see a credit on their bills in the next two or three months, Hall said.

Telus began charging the fee last November to customers who had access to Telus's long-distance service but did not have a long-distance plan with Telus or an alternative provider. That meant Telus customers who used dial-around services - like less2talk's 10-10-969 or Yak's 10-10-yak - had to pay the fee.

Telus customers who dialed directly, but opted to pay higher toll rates rather than signing up for a monthly plan with a \$4.95 access fee, were also charged, whether they made a long-distance phone call or not.

Yak Communications (Canada) Corp. ([www.yak.ca](http://www.yak.ca))- the company behind 10-10-yak as well as other long-distance services - along with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, complained to the CRTC that the fee was really a charge on local service, not long-distance. Under CRTC rules, local rates have to be pre-approved, whereas long-distance rates do not.

About 1,100 Telus customers, out of the almost 500,000 affected, also complained.

In April, the CRTC ordered Telus to reimburse customers who did not use Telus long-distance, calling the fee "an unauthorized increase to the residential local service rate."

At the time, Telus said it was considering appealing the decision, but the company has now decided not to, Hall said.

"We don't want to put our customers in a complicated regulatory decision," Hall said. "So we're just going to move ahead, move on and implement this decision, although we certainly do disagree with it."

One complication with Telus's current billing system is that access fees are charged in advance. So until the billing system can be changed, customers will be charged the \$2.95, and those not using Telus's long-distance service during the billing period will receive a credit on their next bill, Hall said.

Yak's chief legal officer Simon Lockie said he was not surprised it would take some time for Telus to implement the CRTC decision. "It's just been a month," Lockie said. "We're really pleased that the CRTC made the decision it did," Lockie said.

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