



## Telecom Order CRTC 2025-213

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Gatineau, 20 August 2025

*Public record: Tariff Notice 1242*

### Northwestel Inc. – Implementation of credits for outages

#### Summary

Canadians need access to reliable, affordable, and high-quality telecommunications services for every part of their daily lives.

In recognition of the impact of network outages for residents of the Far North, the Commission issued Telecom Regulatory Policy 2025-9, which required Northwestel Inc. (Northwestel), the region's incumbent provider of terrestrial Internet services, to automatically reduce customers' bills when Internet services are disrupted for 24 hours or more. Accordingly, Northwestel has proposed changes to its General Tariff to comply with this new requirement.

The Commission approves Northwestel's proposed changes to its General Tariff, with edits to improve clarity.

#### Application

1. On 30 January 2025, the Commission received an application from Northwestel Inc. (Northwestel) proposing changes to its General Tariff, Item 1735 – Terrestrial Internet Services, and Item 1736 – Terrestrial Enterprise Internet Services. The company proposed to add language to these items to provide automatic bill credits to customers for outages of 24 consecutive hours or more, as directed by the Commission in *Telecommunications in the Far North*, Telecom Regulatory Policy CRTC 2025-9, 16 January 2025 (Telecom Regulatory Policy 2025-9). Northwestel also proposed several housekeeping changes to correct typographical errors.
2. In Telecom Regulatory Policy 2025-9, the Commission specified that these automatic bill credits must be:
  - prorated based on the monthly cost of a customer's plan and the duration of the outage;
  - easily identifiable on a customer's monthly bill as a separate line item, showing the date of the outage and the amount of the credit; and
  - distributed no later than three billing cycles after the date of the outage.

3. Northwestel confirmed that it can immediately implement such automatic bill credits. However, it requires additional time to make the system changes necessary to print the date of the outage on the customer's bill. Currently, the company can issue automatic bill credits for outages of 24 hours or more and print a separate line item with the credit amount on its customer's bills. The printing of the date of the outage requires development, which the company anticipates will be completed within 30 days of the approval of its application.
4. In addition, and further to the direction provided in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2025-9, Northwestel filed a list of circumstances viewed as beyond its control and for which automatic bill credits should not be provided. These included events caused by the customer themselves, force majeure, and commercial power outages.
5. In the list of circumstances beyond its control, Northwestel included any outage during a period when the customer has "released the service to the Company [Northwestel] for the purpose of implementing a change to the service." After the Commission sought clarification, the company indicated that the proposed language is intended to capture circumstances where a customer has requested a change to their service that may result in it being unavailable for more than 24 hours through no fault of Northwestel. The specific circumstances include relocating a mobile or modular home, relocating a business structure, making repairs or significant changes to a structure, and enterprise-grade network changes.

### **Commission's analysis**

6. Northwestel's proposed tariff wording specifies: "Credits will be prorated based on the monthly rate of the customer's package and the duration of the outage and will be issued to customers no later than three billing cycles after the date of service restoration." This is inconsistent with the directives in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2025-9, which requires that the credit be issued no more than three billing cycles after the date of the outage. The Commission is of the view that while it may take longer to calculate the credits based on the date of the outage, it is unlikely to take longer than three billing cycles.
7. Additionally, the Commission considers that the wording in Item 1735.3(5)(a) and Item 1736.3(m)(1) should be modified to ensure there is no implication that the burden is on the customer to advise Northwestel of an outage. As noted in paragraph 11 below, the phrase "is advised" should be replaced with "becomes aware" to reflect the expectation that Northwestel should be actively monitoring the status of its networks and not relying solely on customer reports.
8. The Commission considers Northwestel's list of circumstances it views as beyond its control and for which it should not have to provide automatic bill credits reasonable. To meet the obligations set out in Telecom Regulatory Policy 2025-9, these exceptions should be clearly stated in the General Tariff. The specific circumstances in which the customer has "released the service to the company for the purpose of

implementing a change to the service” should also be clearly stated in the General Tariff.

9. Accordingly, the Commission considers that Northwestel’s General Tariff should be amended to reflect the above as well as some minor edits for clarity, as set out below.

## **Conclusion**

10. In light of the above, the Commission approves Northwestel’s application, with the changes set out below.

11. In Item 1735.3(5)(a) and Item 1736.3(m)(1):

- replace the phrase “is advised” with “becomes aware” in the phrase “from the time the Company is advised of the service outage”; and
- replace the words “after the date of service restoration” with “from the date of the outage”.

12. In Item 1735.3(5)(b) and Item 1736.3(m)(2):

- replace the comma with a semi colon after the word “boycotts”;
- add the phrase “to avoid and” after the word “efforts” in the phrase “so long as the Company uses commercially reasonable efforts to expeditiously remove the causes of such default or delay in the service performance”; and
- add the following after the phrase “released the service to the Company for the purpose of implementing a change to the service”: “(for example, when relocating a mobile or modular home, relocating a business structure, making repairs or significant changes to a structure, or making enterprise-grade network changes)”.

13. Revised tariff pages are to be issued within 10 calendar days of the date of this order. Revised tariff pages can be submitted to the Commission without a description page or a request for approval; a tariff application is not required.

14. In addition, the Commission expects Northwestel to implement the printing of the date of an outage on its customer’s bills by **19 September 2025**.

Secretary General