

Put lawsuit award towards 911

Cell phone users could lead the way

Bravo to James Anderson for taking on Bell Mobility with a class-action lawsuit to recoup monthly fees charged by the company for non-existent 911 service.

These kind of lawsuits are rare in this country. It's bound to take up a lot of Anderson's time and money, and there is no guarantee he will succeed.

Bell charges its northern cell phone customers 75 cents a month for 911 emergency calls even though the territory, or at least Yellowknife, is months away from being able to access it.

This latest saga involving Bell, or its subsidiary NMI Mobility, isn't the first time customers have been left in the lurch.

In 2006, customers across the North endured several days of unexpected disruptions as Bell upgraded its services for Internet

capability. It was only after scores of complaints and media coverage when the glitch was finally explained.

The year before, Bell told customers it was their responsibility to check their bills for errors after long distance charges were applied to a new local prefix 445.

Now they're being sued for \$6 million for charging for a service that no Northerner can access unless they're down south.

According to Anderson's lawyer Landy Marr, if successful, the award would be split between all Bell cell phone customers in the country who are without access to 911 service.

Individual payments, obviously, would not amount to much – \$9 for each year customers have had to pay for it.

Perhaps this is one area where

Anderson can continue to apply his communal approach.

Considering that individual customers stand to benefit little from a successful lawsuit, other than the satisfaction at having a token sum returned to them, perhaps NWT customers wouldn't mind putting the money towards a 911 service for the Territories.

Yellowknife doesn't have a 911 service because the city and territorial government can't agree on who should pay for it.

The territorial government won't commit any money unless such a service covers all NWT communities.

It would seem ridiculous that Bell cell phone users would have to make the first move but perhaps such a gesture would get the ball rolling at city hall and the legislative assembly.

In any event, they would at least be able to claim they're paying for a service that actually exists.

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911 fees

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