

Unpaid 911 cash goes to Stanton charity

Bell Mobility donates unclaimed settlement money to hospital foundation

by Jessica Davey-Quantick
Northern News Services

The Stanton Territorial Hospital Foundation is proving to be one of the bigger winners following a lawsuit settlement that saw cellphone provider Bell Mobility pay out more than \$1 million after charging customers a fee for a non-existent 911 emergency phone service.

On March 31, Bell Mobility Inc. wrote a \$123,044.70 cheque to the hospital foundation, a charitable organization that has previously raised money for needed equipment at the hospital, such as new dialysis units and a mammography machine.

The money was left over from the settlement Bell was ordered to pay last June after a decade-long court battle. Yellowknife plaintiffs James Anderson and his son Samuel Anderson, launched a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Bell customers in November 2007.

"At the end of the day what's left over went to the charity. Bell shouldn't have done this, and so one way or the other they paid money out," said the Andersons' lawyer Sam Marr.

From Oct. 28, 2004 until Nov. 20, 2009, Bell Mobil-



Jessica Davey-Quantick/NNSL file photo

Sandra MacKenzie, chair of the Stanton Territorial Hospital Foundation, left, stands in front of a mockup of the new donor tree, with foundation founding member Gordon Van Tighem and current executive director Linda Bussey on Thursday at the foundation's 20th anniversary celebration. The foundation received a \$123,044.70 cheque from Bell Mobility Inc. – left over money from payment owed to Bell customers who were charged for a non-existent 911 service.

ity charged either separate or bundled 911 fees of 75 cents per month in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, despite the fact that no 911 emergency service was available anywhere in the

North except for Whitehorse. Instead, calls would be routed to a recorded message.

Bell was found liable in 2013. The settlement was approved last June, with Bell ordered to pay back funds to

around 25,000 customers in the North who signed a contract with the company prior to April 13, 2010.

Marr said under the terms of the settlement, people who are still Bell customers would have their portion of the settlement credited back to their accounts.

People who were no longer customers would have cheques mailed to their last known address – and if they hadn't been cashed within six months, that money would be donated to charity. The Andersons legal team chose the Stanton foundation as the recipient for any unpaid funds.

"The settlement agreement itself specifically said that

they can't keep this money, it has to get paid out," said Marr.

"Part of the thinking behind all this was that because this is 911 service, as I understand, this charity would help people in emergency situations as well, because of what they do."

Of the \$1,016,336.57 awarded, \$515,737 went to legal fees and the Andersons received \$5,000, according to Bell.

In an affidavit, Bell stated it issued credits to the account of 9,045 current customers, for a total of \$207,360.70 – about \$23 per account.

Bell issued another \$288,276.25 in refund cheques to the last known addresses of 15,346 people who no longer subscribed. After \$165,231.55 of that was cashed, the remaining, unclaimed amount went to Stanton.

Big birthday gift

Added together, the amounts adds up to a big birthday present for the Stanton Territorial Hospital Foundation, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last week.

"We just got a nice gift this week," said Linda Bussey, executive director of the foundation.

She couldn't say specifically what the money would be spent on yet.

"We're waiting for the new hospital to be built, because we don't want to buy a piece of equipment that is not going to be in use," she said. "The hospital has asked us to really take our time, and they have to tell us what they need ... But we're going to be ready when they say this is what we need, we'll have the money."

Over its 20 years in existence, the foundation has

raised around \$7.5 million, and purchased numerous pieces of equipment, including a digital mammography machine, a CT scanner, and dialysis machines, as well as funding a cancer care navigator, who helps guides and supports families when they're going through cancer treatments.

Bussey said the foundation is looking "outside the box" when it comes to their next big spending projects. "We're trying to be creative – we're really, really looking at different initiatives, different programs because we don't just buy equipment. That's one thing people don't realize," she said.

"So we're looking to do more of maybe having bursaries for staff, scholarships, and supporting families that might need any kind of support during chemo treatment or if there's traveling outside of the NWT."

The foundation is also launching its next fundraising effort, a donor tree where people can buy one of three levels of leaves. Bussey hopes the effort will net the foundation around \$50,000.

"Their names will be engraved on the leaves and they will be in the hospital for all time," said Sandra MacKenzie, foundation chair, adding in the next few months the foundation will also be working on sponsorship for different rooms at the new hospital.

She said these efforts mean more people can stay in the territory, instead of having to travel for health care.

"All of that money has stayed in the North and has benefited people in the North, which is very unique for charities up here," she said.



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5 Years

Josiane Asselin - Danie Boudreau
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Danika Jobin - Jennifer Kravitz
Rachelle Mercredi - Dana Merrigan
Kristan Thompson
Paula Campbell Rogers - Tomiko Robson
Isabelle Freake - Courtney Jung
Elizabeth Stewart - Marilyn Malakoe
Susan Shantora - Donna Meister
Jason Craig - Pat Thagard - Earl Mclsaac
Jordan Martin

10 Years

Angela Gagnon - Kate Powless
Jason Simpson - Evica Kennedy
Chantelle Hotte - Elizabeth Brace
Kim Hemstreet - Deborah Horen
Denise Hurley - Stephen Kirkham
Robyn Scott Stewart - Val Vandenberg
Terri Snyder - Jessica West

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Courtney Lizotte - Landon Peters
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Arnold Krause - Paul MacDonald
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25 Years

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Dean MacInnis - Marilyn Moran
Lucienne Pelletier - Cynthia Russell
Pamela Schlosser - Maureen Tonge
Gwen Young

30 Years

Jan Byrne

35 Years

Sandra Schmalz - Nick Sokolowski

40 Years

Allan McDonald

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Leo Ehrenberg - Pam Monkman
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Public Notice

Healthy Environment and Healthy Peoples
in Yellowknife, Ndilo and Dettah



Health Effects Monitoring Program

Join a community consultation with the Health Effects Monitoring Program (HEMP) team!

Learn about how the Giant Mine Remediation Project will measure possible health effects during Remediation.

We would love to hear from you! Your feedback will help us refine our program to ensure a healthy environment for all.

Location: **Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre**

Date: **April 27, 2017**

Time: **7 pm to 9 pm (Museum Café)**

For more information, email ykhemp@uottawa.ca