News Release

New Partnership Brings Cellular Service to Four Northern Communities

November 4, 2013 – A partnership between SaskTel, Athabasca Basin Development and Huawei was confirmed today to bring SaskTel cellular service for the first time to the communities of Wollaston Lake, Stony Rapids, Fond du Lac First Nation and Black Lake First nation.

This partnership is based on SaskTel’s Community Participation Model, which encourages communities to raise funds to cover the shortfall when it is not economically feasible for SaskTel to finance a new cellular site alone. SaskTel anticipates that the cellular service will be in place by 2015.

“This project will extend SaskTel’s 4G network to communities, which have never had access to cellular service before,” said SaskTel Minister Don McMorris. “These towers will give connectivity to the rest of the world and province, give better access to emergency services and further develop the economic opportunities for the residents of these communities.”

“SaskTel customers experience a level of connectivity that is rare in other sparsely populated parts of the world. We are committed to connecting our rural and northern communities,” said SaskTel President and CEO Ron Styles. “Our Community Participation Model makes it possible for smaller communities have access to our world-class wireless network.”

“There is incredible potential for business and economic development in the Athabasca region, but one of the most significant challenges for the remote area is accessibility,” says Geoff Gay, CEO of Athabasca Basin Development. “These cell phone towers will greatly increase connectivity, which leads to so many benefits for the people and business climate in the region. This contribution gives us an opportunity to do something that will make a real and lasting impact on the Athabasca communities, and we are very pleased to be a partner in this exciting initiative for Saskatchewan’s north.”

“We are extremely pleased to be supporting SaskTel and Athabasca Basin Development in this initiative” said Huawei Canada President Sean Yang. “This is the single largest contribution we’ve made to connect rural and northern Canadians, and reflects our commitment to ensure residents and business across the Province of Saskatchewan have access to innovative technologies.”

SaskTel’s economic analysis for this $5.8 million project covering these four communities, which took into account the overall cost of the tower sites, operating expenses over the first five years, and the anticipated revenues, resulted in a shortfall of $634,000. Athabasca Basin Development provided $249,000 and Huawei contributed $385,000 in funding.
About SaskTel
Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation (SaskTel) is the leading full service communications provider in Saskatchewan, with $1.2 billion in annual revenue and over 1.4 million customer connections including over 607,000 wireless accesses, 492,000 wireline network accesses, 250,000 internet accesses and 97,000 Max™ (TV) subscribers. SaskTel offers a wide range of communications products and services including competitive voice, data, internet, entertainment, security monitoring, messaging, cellular, wireless data and directory services. In addition, SaskTel International offers software solutions and project consulting in countries around the world. SaskTel and its wholly-owned subsidiaries have a workforce of approximately 4,000 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). Visit SaskTel at www.sasktel.com.

About Athabasca Basin Development
Athabasca Basin Development is committed to building and investing in successful businesses. Investments are focused on the resource sector and include partial or complete ownership in ten successful companies with a combined total of over 1300 employees, and last year’s consolidated revenues topping $145M. The company is owned by the seven communities in Northern Saskatchewan’s Athabasca region. Visit www.athabascabasin.ca.

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