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**EDITORIAL: Around the Arctic** October 25, 2012 - 9:30 am

## It's time for movement on Arctic telecoms

### NUNATSIAQ NEWS

You know how bad it can get.

It's the government employer who blocks websites to save bandwidth. It's the internet link that dies in the middle of an email download. Or maybe it's the cell phone — if you're lucky enough to even get cell service — that never works when you need it the most.

No regular person who reads this — especially any Arctic resident reading this on the internet — can deny that a top-to-bottom overhaul of northern Canada's rickety telecommunications system is long overdue.

The companies who sell these services, and now, even governments, know what you know about how bad it can get.

For some, [the Oct. 6, 2011 software glitch that threw the Anik F2 satellite out of whack](#) for most the day was a big wake-up call.

Within a week, [Government of Nunavut officials met to figure out how to better cope with such a screw-up in the future.](#)

But even before that, at the behest of Joint Task Force North, Public Safety Canada and other government agencies, a bureaucratic group called the Northern Communications and Information Systems Working group had already delved into the issue.

The title of [their August 2011 report](#) says it all: "A Matter of Survival." They began work on it after a less well publicized communications meltdown that occurred in August 2009. This was during the Operation Nanook exercise near Iqaluit, when emergency responders discovered their cell phone and internet connections repeatedly failed.

At the same time, a complex menu of federal government broadband subsidies for rural and remote regions, delivered through Industry Canada, is due to expire by 2016.

So what should government do?

First, territorial, provincial and federal governments should take a good look at what, in the Arctic, amounts to a new technology: undersea fibre-optic cable.

The leading proponent of this technology, a firm called [Arctic Fibre Inc.](#), plans to invest some \$600 million of private money in an undersea cable between Europe and Asia. This cable would pass through waters off Nunavut, Labrador, Nunavik, the Northwest Territories and Alaska.

Arctic Fibre has just applied for the the necessary licences. They're lining up customers. If they get the required number of telecom firms to sign on, especially in Asia, they will build this line. When that happens, 52 per cent of Nunavut's population will get high-speed telecommunications at a dramatically lower cost.

No government with jurisdiction over any section of Canada's eastern Arctic can afford to ignore this opportunity. Should the Government of Nunavut, for example, ignore this development, they would likely endure a major political embarrassment.

Some players have given the fibre-optic proposal a frosty reception. The [Nunavut Broadband Development Corp.](#), for example, argues against it on the basis of parity: it can't deliver equal levels of access to every Nunavut community.

Of all the possible objections to fibre optic, this is the weakest. If governments were to apply the parity principle to other forms of vital infrastructure, nothing in Nunavut would ever get built. Pangnirtung would not receive a new dock until all other communities also received a new dock. Iqaluit would not receive a hydroelectric dam until all other communities also received a hydroelectric dam. And so on.

Here's a more realistic approach: ask the CRTC to define a new minimum acceptable standard of service for those communities, such as Grise Fiord, that will not enjoy a connection to a fibre optic cable. Then lobby governments to ensure it's carried out.

Another objection to undersea fibre-optic is more substantial. Would such a cable be vulnerable to [www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674its\\_time\\_for\\_movement\\_on\\_arctic\\_telecoms/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674its_time_for_movement_on_arctic_telecoms/)

**Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.**  
Working for the well-being of Inuit  
We're updating the enrollment list

Call Margaret Kusugak to check if you and your family members are on the list.  
(867) 645-5400 or 1-888-236-5400  
or mkusugak@tunngavik.com  
[www.tunngavik.com](http://www.tunngavik.com)

**SECOND CALL FOR PROPOSALS**  
Deuxième Appel de Propositions

**DEVELOPMENT OF A FIBRE-OPTIC CABLE**  
Développement d'un câble à fibre optique

**Deadline: October 31, 2012**  
Échéance: le 31 octobre 2012

**www.gov.nu.ca/cley**

**HAMLET OF ARCTIC BAY**

damage caused by shore-fast ice movement? Is there a risk of catastrophic cable cuts that cannot be repaired during the Arctic's long, dark winters?

Telesat, whose dominant position in Canadian Arctic telecommunications is obviously threatened by Arctic Fibre's proposal, is fond of raising such objections.

But Greenland, an Arctic country where ice, glaciers and a long dark winter are a normal part of life, now uses a fibre optic cable that was finished in 2009, connecting Nuuk and Qaqortoq to landing points in Iceland and Newfoundland.

And a 1,400-kilometre fibre-optic cable connects Norway to the town of Longyearbyen, located on Svalbard, a remote collection of Arctic islands that are ice-bound for much of the year.

As for Telesat, they're proposing a 10-year plan of their own. Under it, they're inviting governments to spend \$120 million over the next 10 years to buy currently unused space on three of the firm's satellites. Telesat would spend \$40 million of its own money. The result? All of Nunavut would enjoy what Telesat calls "true broadband internet."

This leads to the second measure that governments should insist on — a value-for-money audit of the current broadband subsidy system, which has existed since about 2004.

Telesat and other players, such as the NDBC and the SSI Group, which operates the Qiniq brand in Nunavut, have made use of Industry Canada grants and subsidies for years. A value-for-money audit would reveal whether these funds have been used efficiently.

Given that Telesat urges more government spending in the future, it's essential that Industry Canada, before making any decision on Telesat's proposal, do a thorough audit to review the use of what has already been spent.

Third, governments, along with the CRTC, need to develop a comprehensive long-term plan for upgrading northern Canada's telecom system. The CRTC's recent rejection of Northwestel's proposed use of Astral benefits money makes the development of such a plan even more urgent than before. **JB**

✉ 🖨️ ➦ SHARE 🌐 📧 COMMENT ON THIS STORY

**(4) Comments:**

**#1. Posted by Random Guy on October 25, 2012**

Internet speed is based on 2 factors. Throughput and Latency. What Telesat is proposing increases throughput, but it does not fix the latency issue. This is not a viable option long term.

Devices will start to integrate more and more ip based communications that are latency dependant (IP telephony). Web servers are starting to close incoming connections faster and faster. It's not uncommon now to see a web-server closing a connection at 500-700ms. As security becomes more and more important, we will see security appliances closing these connections even faster.

Simply put, the proposal by Telesat isn't a long term solution. It's a solution built for the needs of right now. 5-10 years from now people will need a heck of a lot more than Telesat can provide. The only answer is a fibre trunk.

**#2. Posted by maypi sompati on October 25, 2012**

how long will it take to get our satellight upgraded???

**#3. Posted by Northgasm on October 25, 2012**

Another great editorial, Mr. Bell. As usual.

Just wanted to add that fibre-optic would give northern communities the means to achieve proper telecommunication, but it needs to happen in a regulated and competitive environment or else it doesn't work.

Here in Yellowknife, we just got a fibre-optic link across the Mackenzie River. Sure the download speed has improved somewhat during low-traffic hours, but our bandwidth is still capped and about 15 times pricier than in Edmonton. Youtube and the likes are heavily throttled and upload is as crappy as ever.

That's because Northwestel enjoys a monopoly and they have no interest in offering their customers a better, cheaper Internet. Hopefully SSI's legal effort to disband this racket will pay off soon. Right now all we have is a fibre link without the Internet that comes with it.

**#4. Posted by Putuguk on October 25, 2012**

The mainland portion of Nunavut can be joined to the North American fibre network by using microwave towers at a fraction of the cost of laying undersea line.

Towers should be placed along the road routes that have been proposed in Kiv and Kit so that the towers can be serviced more easily in the future.

Clearly, a Europe/Asia fibre line is not the only solution to Nunavut's communication needs.

**Mechanic Position**  
 The following skills will be required:  
 • Adult have valid government Heavy Duty Mechanic Certificate  
 • 5 years experience as a journeyman Heavy Duty Mechanic  
 • Knowledge of work place safety and emergency response

**MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS:**  
 You MUST have a valid class 5 (or better) driver's license.  
 Overtime and call-back will be required in case of emergency or breakdown of water or sewer trucks.  
 As a member of the Collective Agreement you will be entitled to all the benefits such as VTA, Northern Allowance, Holiday Allowance, housing allowance (if you are a home owner), Severance Package, Full life, Dental, Vision, Health, LTD and Weekly Indemnity Plus generous vacation and other time-off benefits.  
 The salary range is \$32.00 to \$38.50 per hour depending on the qualifications and experience and you will be on 6-month probationary period and pay increase will be determined after anniversary date of hire has passed.

Please send your application/resume to:  
 Fax: 867.438.8767 or  
 email to: [hr@nrcan.gc.ca](mailto:hr@nrcan.gc.ca)  
 Housing may be available for rental from the Internet.

**CLOSING DATE:**  
**October 31, 2012 at 5:00 p.m.**  
 Applications and a job description may be requested or picked up at the Human Resources Office during office hours.

More...

**Project No. MC113018**  
**Water Pump House**  
**Mechanical and Electrical Upgrades**  
 – Coral Harbour, NU. –

Sealed tender addressed to the Regional Director, c/o Contracts Coordinator, Department of Community and Government Services, Government of Nunavut, P.O. Bag 002, Rankin Inlet, NU, X0C 0G0.

Must be received by:  
**4:00 P.M. (Local Time) November 20, 2012**


Contractors may obtain tender documents from the above address on October 17, 2012.

To be considered each tender must be submitted on the forms provided.

*For the purpose of this tender call, the provisions of the Nunavummi Nangminiqatunik Ikajuuṭi Policy apply.*

The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

More...



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
 Nunavut Housing Corporation  
 Hon. Peter Taptuna, Minister  
**Mortgage Accounting System**  
 ("RFP 2012-2013 MAS")

The Nunavut Housing Corporation will receive proposals to replace its existing Mortgage Accounting System with a new application software.

Documents are available on MERX  
 Reference Number PR254839

More ...



**Building Nunavut Together**  
 Nunavut iluqatigilniq  
 Bâtir le Nunavut ensemble

**Priority Hiring**  
 The Government of Nunavut wants to create a more representative workforce so that if you



Realistically, a combination of towers and fibre is needed.

Many places in rural North America go the microwave tower route instead of relying on satellite when there is no access to a fibre-optic line. Nunavut need be no different by ignoring this obvious option.

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Your Name:


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Your Location:

Your comment:

Notify me of follow-up comments?

Please enter the word you see in the image below:




...to better understand and serve the needs of Nunavummit. Priority will be given to Nunavut Land Claims Beneficiaries.

**Community Inspector Assessor**  
 Department of Community and Government Services,  
 Cape Dorset, NU

**Polar Bear Biologist I**  
 Department of Environment  
 Igloolik, NU

[More...](#)



**REQUEST FOR TENDERS AND PROPOSALS**  
 Government of Nunavut

**Snow Removal – Hospital**  
 RFT 209803                      Closing Date      Nov. 6, 2012

**Snow Removal – Justice and NAC**  
 RFT 209801                      Closing Date      Nov. 6, 2012

[More...](#)

**Proposed Hackett River Project Community Consultation**

Xstrata Zinc Representatives will make a presentation on the **Hackett River Project**, a proposed metal mine south of Bathurst Inlet, and will give an update on the **Bathurst Inlet Port & Road (BIPR) Project** status.

**Kugluktuk**  
 Monday, October 22nd  
 7-10pm  
 Community Hall


**Cambridge Bay**  
 Tuesday, October 23rd  
 7-10pm  
 Main Community Hall

**Kappanuk**  
 Wednesday, Oct 24th  
 7-10pm  
 Community Hall

**Tuktoyaktuk**  
 Thursday, Oct 25th  
 7-10pm  
 Community Hall

**Qijaq Havn**  
 Friday, October 26th  
 7-10pm  
 Community Hall

For more information, contact:  
 Julia Pigeon-Lemke,  
 Xstrata Zinc Canada  
 1 (867) 842-5423  
 julia.pigeon@xstratazinc.ca



[More...](#)



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Building **Nunavut** Together  
*Nunavut* ᑎᓄᓂᓄᓐ ᑎᓄᓂᓄᓐ  
Bâtir le **Nunavut** ensemble

**Priority Hiring**  
The Government of Nunavut wants to create a more representative workforce, so that it can better understand and serve the needs of Nunavummiut. Priority will be given to Nunavut Land Claims Beneficiaries.

**Manager, Young Offenders Facility**  
Department of Justice,  
Iqaluit, NU

**Senior Legal Registries Specialist**  
Department of Human Resources  
Iqaluit, NU

More...

**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

The Inuit Business Development Corporation (IBDC) is partnering with the Canada Business Development Centre (CBDC) in looking for a dynamic individual to manage the CBDC in part of the Business Development Centre of IBDC.

Under the direction of the General Manager of the IBDC, the individual will be directly responsible for the management of the CBDC and its services. They will support community economic and business development throughout the CBDC network across other clients. The CBDC is delivered in partnership to the IBDC through a joint funded contract agreement.

**Qualifications for the position include:**

- A degree or diploma in an area such as business administration, economic development, commerce or related field
- High level of writing and verbal communication skills
- Ability to speak and write in Inuktitut and English or another official language
- In-depth economic development, or financing experience
- Knowledge of cooperative programs including word processing, databases, spreadsheets and statistics
- Experience delivering multi-faceted programs or services

The position is located in Iqaluit.  
Annual salary will range from \$75,000 to \$85,000 plus a competitive benefits package.

Please send a **one-page** cover letter and resume to:  
Hiring Manager  
Office Manager, IBDC  
20th Fl., 100 St. J  
Iqaluit, NU A0A 0H0  
Phone: 867-979-1000  
Fax: 867-979-1000  
Email: [hr@ibdc.ca](mailto:hr@ibdc.ca)

**CLOSING DATE: OCTOBER 31, 2012**

More...

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