

Competitive cell service coming to all Nunavut communities by 2019

Bell and Qiniq are expanding their cellular networks to include 4G data

By Sara Frizzell, [CBC News](#) Posted: Sep 19, 2017 1:01 PM CT Last Updated: Sep 19, 2017 1:01 PM CT

Nunavut communities will have more options for cell service by 2019, as both Bell Mobility and Qiniq expand their services.

Currently, around half of Nunavut communities do not have cell service. Bell is building cell towers in those communities and Qiniq is upgrading its towers to offer cell service.

Bell will partner with Northwestel to use the new [satellite internet infrastructure](#), announced last week, to include 4G data in its cell plans.

- [Ottawa commits \\$50M to get all 25 Nunavut communities faster internet by 2019](#)

Northwestel was awarded \$50 million by the federal government for a proposal that will triple Nunavut's internet speeds and expand bandwidth, bringing the territory in line with internet offerings available in other remote northern locations.

"As we're developing the backhaul network ... we'd be working with Bell to put cellular towers in every community," said Northwestel's director of communications Andrew Anderson.

"There are already cellular towers in several communities, but there's still 16 left to do."

Bell currently offers cell plans in nine communities, including Rankin Inlet and Iqaluit.

Qiniq, which provides internet service in all of Nunavut's 25 communities, including 4G internet in 18 — soon to be 20 — communities says it will be announcing its own cell service in the new year.

The company installed cell towers in all communities in 2005. It is now upgrading its network to make it 4G capable and simultaneously building a 2G, or GSM, cellular network, which it hopes to connect with Northwestel's landline network.

Dean Proctor, chief development officer for SSi Micro, which is a partner in Qiniq, says Bell and Northwestel's announcement does not affect upgrades to the Qiniq network already underway.

"We're still in the midst of a \$75 million upgrade," Proctor said. "In terms of where we're at and our investments moving forward, nothing stops. It goes full speed ahead."

Faster internet for Nunavut

As for faster internet, Proctor says Qiniq had already made plans to buy bandwidth on the satellite Northwestel will be using to improve internet speed before Northwestel's internet infrastructure announcement last week.

As a condition of the government funding, the infrastructure Northwestel is building is required to be open to all. Proctor says that means good things for all providers in Nunavut.

- [Fast promises on slow internet in the North](#)
- [CRTC ruling will improve internet in territories in time, say providers](#)

Northwestel and Qiniq have not worked out how Qiniq will take advantage of the new "data highway" Northwestel is building, but both companies expect Qiniq to benefit from the new infrastructure.

Northwestel says some communities will have access to faster internet before the end of next year, while others will have to wait until 2019.

With files from Walter Strong

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