

Canada’s telecommunications watchdog wants to know what northerners think about their internet, wireless and phone services, especially those services offered by Northwestel.

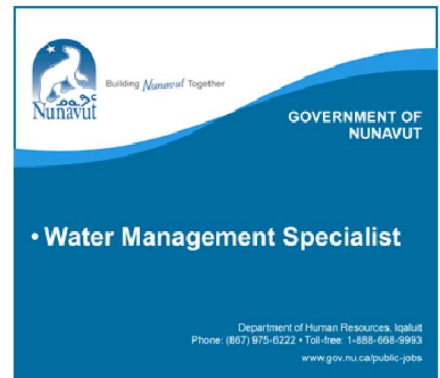
It’s part of a big review of Northwestel and the state of telecommunications in Canada’s North that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission launched on Nov. 2.

“We want to know more about how the telecommunications needs of Canadians living in the areas served by Northwestel are being met to ensure that all Canadians have access to high-quality telecommunication services,” the CRTC said in its online pitch to northern residents.

To participate in the survey, you can go to this webpage to find information on how to send your comments via fax, mail or through an online comment form.

If you choose to use their online form, you have to agree to a privacy statement, and you have to identify yourself—you cannot submit comments anonymously.

(After it was launched earlier this month, the online form was temporarily hampered by a glitch that prevented it from loading. That problem is now fixed.)





This will likely hurt Northwestel financially—in almost all communities, it costs the company more to offer landline telephone service than the service produces in revenues, the CRTC says.

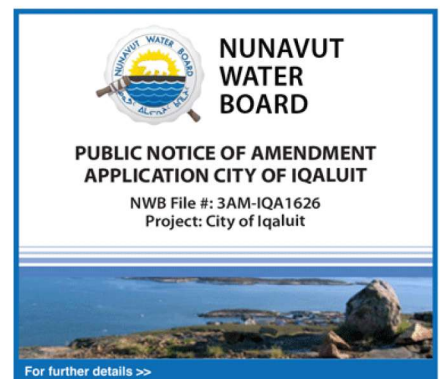
So the CRTC wants to study whether the company should be compensated for that loss, and if so, how it should be compensated, and who pays.

Another reason is that the COVID-19 pandemic—which forced many workers and students to stay home—has exposed the weaknesses in northern Canada’s broadband services.

Retail satellite internet

Another question they’ll look at is of crucial importance to Nunavut and remote communities in the N.W.T. and Yukon: retail satellite internet services.

Right now, the CRTC does not regulate the satellite-based internet services that Northwestel offers in Nunavut. That’s partly because Northwestel faces a competitor in that market: SSi Canada’s Qiniq services.



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Also, the CRTC says you should keep in mind all submissions they receive will be made public.

Specifically, the CRTC wants to hear about your experiences with internet, wireless and telephone services.

And if you are a customer of Northwestel, the CRTC wants to know if you think Northwestel’s service is accessible, affordable and reliable.

The survey covers everyone who lives within Northwestel’s operating territory: Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Yukon and parts of northern British Columbia and northern Alberta.

One reason for the larger review of Northwestel is the company is losing access to a special fund that has subsidized its local landline telephone services in the North for more than 20 years.

That high-cost serving area fund is created with money contributed by the telecommunications industry in Canada—but as of Dec. 21, 2021, it will be eliminated.

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NOTICE OF RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC HEARING



PHASE 2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB or Board) has scheduled the resumption of the in-person Public Hearing in respect of Baffinland Iron Mines Corp’s “Phase 2 Development”.

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The deadline for submission is on
November 20, 2020

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But that could change, the CRTC said.

“Accordingly, the commission will consider in the current proceeding the market for satellite retail Internet access services, and whether there may be a need to regulate that market in Northwestel’s operating territory,” the CRTC said.

That’s partly because of technological change, such as the potential arrival of low-earth-orbit, or “LEO,” satellites, the CRTC said.

The CRTC will also look at the state of competition in the North, and what can be done to foster more competition.

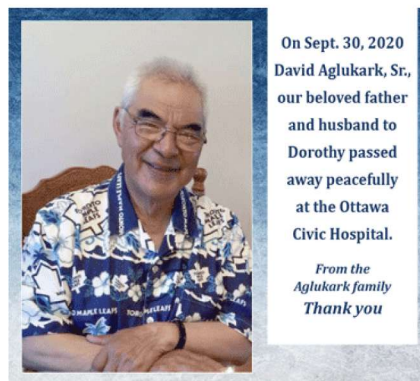
That includes the contentious question of how competitors can buy wholesale access on networks that Northwestel controls, so they can offer retail services that compete with Northwestel.

That’s a big issue right now across all of Canada, where small upstart competitors like TekSavvy and Comwave Canada have been battling the big three telecommunications companies for wholesale access to their built networks at reasonable rates.

And Nunavut is no exception. SSI Canada and Northwestel are still mired in a dispute over wholesale access to Northwestel’s new satellite network, which was built with the help of a \$49.9-million contribution from the federal government.

Northwestel is a wholly owned subsidiary of Bell Canada Enterprises, but the CRTC regulates Northwestel separately from Bell Canada.

SHARE THIS STORY



A banner for a Request for Proposal (RFP) from the Nunavut Association. The banner has a blue header with the Nunavut Association logo on the left and the text "REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL" on the right. Below the header, it says "Design, Development and Testing of Training Materials" and "Business Capacity Development RFP2020-03". At the bottom left, it specifies the closing date: "Closing Date and Time: December 7, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. EST". At the bottom right, there is a "More Info" button with a right-pointing arrow.



A notice of public meetings from the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB). The notice has a red header with the text "NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS". Below the header, there is a large, stylized "POSTPONED" watermark. The text below the watermark reads: "AGNICO EAGLE'S 'SALINE EFFLUENT DISCHARGE TO MARINE ENVIRONMENT' PROJECT PROPOSAL". At the bottom, it states: "The Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) has scheduled a Community Roundtable and Pre-Hearing Conference on November 25-26, 2020, following technical meetings November 23-24, 2020." At the very bottom, there is a link: "CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO".