



Context

Nunavik's telecommunications sector covers a range of services, including broadband Internet, landline and cellular telephony, as well as radio and television.

The Kativik Regional Government has been delivering broadband Internet services throughout the region since 2004 with subsidies from Canada and Québec. Despite the many investments and a successful technical approach, the performance level of the technology in place is poor when compared to urban regions of the country. For its part, Nunavik's only cellular telephony service was launched at the beginning of 2010. Nunacell, a subsidiary of the Makivik Corporation in partnership with Lynx Mobility, offers local and long-distance calling and text messaging in a 20- to 40-km radius of communities.

With the technical support of Taqramiut Nipingat Inc., local FM radio stations are under the responsibility of municipalities and operate with very limited funding. Taqramiut Nipingat Inc. also offers regional radio and television programming and broadcasting with only very limited funding. Landline telephony and cable television services, along with one print-media outlet, are also available in all the communities.

A Few of the Challenges

Providing quality broadband Internet service with the current infrastructure is impossible. Moreover, at the pace technology is evolving, the gap between north and south is widening at a rapid pace.

Broadband infrastructure is expensive and needs financial support from the provincial and federal governments. Current government funding is scheduled to expire in 2016. No new federal or provincial programs have been announced to keep up with the ever-growing demand.

Landline telephony services do not include digital services and local infrastructure and equipment has reached the end of their useful service lives. Smaller communities have a limited number of long distance lines, which are often full during emergencies.

To date, the Nunacell service is only available in four communities: Kuujuaq, Puvirnituq, Inukjuak and Salluit. Kuujuarapik receives service through the Whapmagoostui development corporation. Existing cellular telephony service has connectivity problems with landline telephony caused by outdated landline infrastructure.

Local FM radio stations and Taqramiut Nipingat Inc. radio and television do not have enough funding to produce the programming demanded by Nunavimmiut.

Solutions and Priorities

Identify funding and develop quality broadband Internet access in order to implement advanced medical, videoconferencing, e-justice and long-distance education services.

Prepare a regional telecommunications plan that is supported by Québec, Canada and the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission.

Scale up and maintain existing cellular telephony infrastructure to include cellular data capabilities, and streamline this infrastructure with Tamaani Internet.

Modernize the landline telephony infrastructure.

Fund a feasibility plan concerning the implementation of fibre-optics infrastructure.

Fund Taqramiut Nipingat Inc. and local FM radio stations to expand programming, to train more local staff, and to upgrade broadcasting infrastructure.

CBC-North programming is almost inexistent in most communities.

Discussion

Telecommunications are essential to community and economic development. However, the technologies currently in place only partly satisfy community and business needs. Access to information is equally important. The development of fibre-optics infrastructure will be connected to the exploitation of the region's mineral and energy potentials, and land transportation networks. Coherent regional direction is needed to guide this development.

