

CONFIDENTIAL

DMO request 2- pager on state of broadband coverage for remote/Indigenous communities in Canada

Overview of Indigenous Connectivity in Canada

August 29th, 2018

National Summary

Historically, connectivity for indigenous communities and households has lagged behind that of other rural communities in Canada, often because of remoteness and challenging geography. Recent connectivity initiatives by the department have significantly improved access to basic broadband for first nations, but there is still a significant gap compared with the general population:

- Prior to the launch of the Connecting Canadians Program (CCP) in 2014, approximately 64% of indigenous households did not have access to a basic broadband connection (5 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload) and were considered underserved.
- When the Connecting Canadians Program concludes in 2019, this number will be halved to 32%. This remains an order of magnitude higher than the 3.4% of all Canadian households that will remain underserved at the completion of the Connecting Canadians Program.
- Over 70% of indigenous households do not have access to a connection meeting the CRTC's speed target of 50/10 Mbps. This is 5 times higher than the 13% of all Canadian households that do not have access to a 50/10 Mbps connection.
- A provincial/territorial breakdown of these numbers are presented in Appendix A

The Connect to Innovate Program (CTI) is poised to make a significant impact on connectivity for indigenous communities, providing them with high-speed backbone connectivity that will empower future household speeds exceeding the CRTC's 50/10 Mbps target.

- Of a total of 897 indigenous communities in Canada, just over half (460) do not have a high-speed backbone connection and were eligible for CTI funding. Of these, 191 will benefit from the Connect to Innovate program, providing communities and institutions with modern connectivity that rivals that of urban centres and laying the foundation for future service at speeds of 50/10 Mbps and higher.

Regional Breakdown:

- **Atlantic Canada:** The greatest indigenous connectivity gap in the Atlantic Provinces is in coastal Labrador. While CCP did not address this area, two CTI projects awarded to Bell Canada will greatly improve connectivity for all of Coastal Labrador. The Glooscap first Nation will also be connected by a CTI project. Other Indigenous communities in the Atlantic Provinces are generally well-served at 5/1 Mbps.

- **Quebec:** The greatest indigenous connectivity gap in Quebec is in the far northern Nunavik region. A CTI project will bring fibre-optic and microwave connectivity to five communities in Nunavik, and will improve satellite connectivity for 9 other communities. Future phases of this initiative could eventually bring fibre to all 14 communities with additional funds. The Connecting Canadians program has brought fibre-optic connectivity to First Nations in Schefferville and Obedjiwan which previously relied on satellite connectivity.
- **Ontario:** Indigenous connectivity in Ontario is better than in most provinces, due to the larger number of First Nations communities located near urban centres. Indigenous connectivity gaps are mostly in Northern Ontario. Connecting Canadians Program projects are reducing the number of underserved indigenous households in the province by almost half, and CTI projects are bringing improved connectivity to remote indigenous communities such as the Matawa First Nations 300km north of Thunder Bay, as well as communities on the Hudson and James Bay coasts including Attawapiskat, Kashechewan, Fort Albany, Fort Severn, and Peawanuck.
- **Prairies:** The Connecting Canadians Program has had a significant positive impact on Indigenous household connectivity in Alberta and Saskatchewan, leaving Manitoba with the largest connectivity gap in the prairies. In fact, Northern Manitoba has the worst connectivity in all of Canada. Connect to Innovate has approved a project that would provide transformative fibre-optic connectivity to Northern Manitoba First Nations. Due diligence is under way for this project, but has faced some challenges.
- **British Columbia:** Connecting Canadians Program projects are making a significant difference for First Nations communities in BC, especially in the province's interior. Remaining underserved First Nations are mainly in hard-to reach coastal areas. Two Connect to Innovate projects under the joint federal/provincial Connected Coast initiative will bring cutting-edge fibre connectivity to coastal First Nations, reaching the last frontier of underserved indigenous communities in the province.
- **Territories:** the Yukon and Northwest Territories both have significant microwave and fibre infrastructure, and few indigenous households are underserved in those territories. Nunavut, which is mostly indigenous and features much more challenging island geography, relies entirely on satellites for its telecommunications needs, leaving all of its population with sub-5 Mbps service. A NorthwesTel project funded by Connect to Innovate will make use of the recently-launched Telesat T19v satellite to greatly increase the available capacity for the territory, benefitting households, institutions and the territorial government.