
Assembly of First Nations

473 Albert Street, 9th Floor
Ottawa, Ontario K1R 5B4
Telephone: 613-241-6789 Fax: 613-241-5808
www.afn.ca



Assemblée des Premières Nations

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Ottawa (Ontario) K1R 5B4
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February 28, 2011

Manager, Mobile Technology and Services
Engineering, Planning and Standard Branch
Industry Canada
300 Slater Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C8

RE: Canada Gazette, Part I, December 4, 2010, Consultation on a Policy and Technical Framework for the 700 MHz Band and Aspects Related to Commercial Mobile Spectrum – SMSE-018-10

On behalf of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), this letter is intended to provide a First Nations perspective on some of the key issues and concerns in regards to the development of a Policy and Technical Framework for the 700 MHz Band and Aspects Related to Commercial Mobile Spectrum.

Broadband infrastructure is essential for the improved economic development, health and education needs of First Nations. The 700 MHz spectrum opens up opportunities for innovation, increased competitiveness, and open internet access which can be of great benefit towards improving the socio-economic status of First Nations. Many First Nations communities are located in rural and remote regions and are faced with a challenging socio-economic development reality compared with the rest of Canada. To ensure First Nations have the opportunity to fully participate in the economy and establish necessary capacities in this industry to serve First Nation communities, consideration should be given to clearly define spectrum allocations to be set aside for First Nations parties.

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Head Office/Siège Social

Unit 5 — 167 Akwesasne International Rd., Akwesasne, ON K6H 5R7 Telephone: 613-932-0410 Fax: 613-932-0415
Suite no 5 — 167, chemin Akwesasne International, Akwesasne (ON) K6H 5R7 Téléphone: 613-932-0410 Télécopieur: 613-932-0415

In urban areas, the Canadian wireless market is characterized by a more intense multi-party competition. This is in contrast to rural and remote areas and especially in First Nations communities where there will be at best one service provider, usually the wireless company owned by the incumbent telephone company or there no wireless service. First Nations service providers generally, must acquire wireless spectrum from telecommunications companies. Some First Nations have been attempting to obtain their own frequency and find it impossible to compete. The consultations must consider the unique circumstances and location of First Nations communities in addressing this gap.

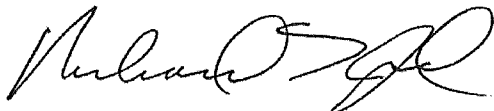
In addition, spectrum allocations are critically important to improving emergency management and response and this is no more evident than in First Nations communities. Access to modern and reliable communications capabilities is essential for the safety and security of First Nations communities. First Nations communities are often located in remote and rural regions of the country and must have the ability to communicate during emergencies and day to day operations. The needs of First Nations medical, fire and policing agencies must be considered during the spectrum allocation process.

It is necessary to increase the adoption and availability of broadband and other communications technologies among First Nations. Given the number of First Nations communities located in rural and remote areas, it is our recommendation that Industry Canada consider convening a meeting specifically on First Nations connectivity issues in the immediate future, to receive technical recommendations and advice from the AFN National Information and Communications Technology Technicians/Policy Table.

If convening a discussion on this matter can be arranged, I welcome your staff to contact Karen Hunter, AFN Executive Coordinator, at (613) 241-6789 ext 203 to make arrangements. Alternatively, we assemble our technical table semi annually. We would be pleased to welcome you to a dialogue with our subject specialists.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Jock', written in a cursive style.

Richard Jock
Chief Executive Officer