



April 21, 2022

MR. KEVIN O'REILLY
MLA, FRAME LAKE

Oral Question 898-19(2) Internet Access to Students

This letter is in follow-up to the question raised on February 21, 2022, regarding internet access for students, where I committed to provide information on the Digital Communication Network (DCN) roll-out by Northwestel, and how it is going to improve internet access for Yellowknife school authorities.

The Technology Service Centre (TSC) oversees the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) network connectivity provided to schools. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) works with the TSC to facilitate the exchange of information and support between the TSC and the JK-12 education bodies. Education bodies also each play an important role in setting up, supporting, and managing student access to online resources in schools and classrooms to ensure the network is used appropriately.

The TSC is rolling out the new DCN to schools in all communities through a contract awarded to Northwestel in September 2021. This work is currently underway.

In September 2021, capacity in Yellowknife was increased from 1 gigabyte (GB) to 2GB. Under the existing contract, we have the ability to increase the bandwidth to 5GB if additional capacity is required. However, the 2GB provided to Yellowknife schools and the GNWT is not currently being fully utilized.

As a part of the new DCN contract, the TSC will be able to leverage new satellite technology (Low Earth Orbit - LEO) as it becomes available in the North for GNWT schools. As this new technology becomes available, the TSC will evaluate and implement it where possible to expand the bandwidth for schools in satellite serviced communities to allow for better performance.

To facilitate online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the TSC has provided ECE with Turbo Sticks and Chromebooks. ECE manages the distribution of these resources to schools.

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The GNWT is committed to providing secure and reliable connectivity to support the needs of northerners working and learning online and continues to work with ECE to understand the challenges and support improvements.



Diane Archie
Minister
Infrastructure

c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Legislative Coordinator
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Honourable R.J. Simpson, Minister
Education, Culture and Employment

Stephen R. Loutitt, Deputy Minister
Infrastructure

John MacDonald, Deputy Minister
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