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## SSi Micro seeks to offer local phone service

Applies to CRTC to allow competition with NorthwTel in Nunavut

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An internet company wants to tap into the local telephone business in the North, but it needs permission from the country's telecommunications regulator first.

SSi Micro made its case last week in Yellowknife to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), which regulates Canadian broadcasting and telecommunications services.

The company offers long distance phone service in Nunavut communities using its Qiniq internet connection through a device called a ChatBox.

"It is a really small little device that plugs into your internet service and from the box it plugs into any normal phone and with that we have configured it to allow for long distance calling to anywhere in North America," said Dean Proctor, chief development officer for SSi Micro.

NorthwTel is the only provider of local telephone service in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon and northern B.C.

"What we need permission from the CRTC to do is to have local to local calling, Qiniq to Northwestel," said Proctor. "As long as we are not doing that, in fact we can't do that because Northwestel won't allow us to, it is certainly well within the rules."

John Macri, director of telecommunications policy with the CRTC, said there has never been another local telephone service provider in the north. Though the idea was not feasible a few years ago, Macri said things have changed.

"The cost of actually opening up the territory to competition was quite high," said Macri. "Circumstances obviously have changed and now we're taking another look at the issue."

Both SSi Micro and NorthwTel made their cases to the CRTC. The regulator will decide by the end of the year if SSi Micro will be allowed to compete with NorthwTel.

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2011/10/15 at 1:21 AM ET

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It would be great to have a different company competing against Northwestel, we pay so much for clothing and food in the north it would really help us northerners to have cheaper and more affordable phone company in the North, I hope it will be approved by CRTC.

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#### ScurvyDawg

2011/10/14 at 5:59 PM ET

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Well this would be interesting! Let's see what the CRTC has to say...

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