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## Long-distance calling gadget unveiled in Nunavut

Qiniq Chatbox uses "most efficient routing" to make satellite voice over Internet viable

**Thandie Vela**

Northern News Services

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### NUNAVUT

The Qiniq network is introducing a new long-distance calling option across Nunavut.

Qiniq Chatbox, a voice adaptor that connects between a home phone and Internet modem, allows the user to make calls to anywhere in North America, at seven cents per minute. It was unveiled at the Nunavut Trade Show and Conference, which took place in Iqaluit at the Arctic Winter Games Arena during the last week of September.

"Here in Nunavut people just don't have viable voice- and video-over-the-Internet solutions that work," SSI Micro director of marketing and logistics Charlotte Walker said, explaining why the gadget is being launched in the territory first.

With no terrestrial communications infrastructure in Nunavut, Internet services are delivered over satellite, which makes technology like Skype and other voice-over Internet services perform poorly in the territory.

The Chatbox technology is designed to work via satellite more efficiently, SSI chief development officer Dean Proctor said.

"The latency is the big issue," Proctor said, explaining the multiple destinations and distances involved with satellite communication that cause audible delays. "We've found ways to work around that."

Using technology Proctor described as "most efficient routing," the Chatbox manipulates the satellite traffic routing to cut down the latency. "We're tricking things, basically," Proctor said. "Making it as efficient as possible in the routing."

Kevin Sloboda, a municipal enforcement officer in Iqaluit, tried the Chatbox when it was launched at the trade show.

Sloboda described a local phone call he made to his wife as "static," but said a call made to Yellowknife "was crystal clear."

SSI founder and CEO Jeff Philipp boiled the issue down to a "regulatory problem, not the technology." Because SSI is barred from providing telecommunication service in the North, Sloboda's local call was being carried by satellite to Yellowknife, where it was likely routed south to Ottawa, and perhaps even back to Yellowknife again before returning to Iqaluit. The Chatbox technology aims to minimize this number of "hops" a satellite signal makes.

All in all, Sloboda said the Chatbox is "a good product" that can relieve the "big problem" of communication in the territory.

"Cost is always a factor," Sloboda said, adding he was looking into the device for use by his department.

While the portable, pay-as-you-go voice Chatbox is now available in Nunavut as a consumer product, the voice and video Chatbox is currently only available on an enterprise model, for large-scale users such as government departments and corporations, Walker said.

The Northwest Territories release date for the Chatbox has not yet been determined.

The Qiniq network spans across 25 communities in Nunavut. SSI owns and operates the Qiniq network in Nunavut.



Charlotte Walker, director of marketing and logistics for SSI Micro Group of Companies, displays the Qiniq Chatbox, the company's new voice-over Internet service recently released across Nunavut. - Thandie Vela/NNSL photo



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