

**National Public Safety Telecommunications Council
Cross Border Interoperability Forum Luncheon
Embassy of Canada**

Remarks by
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May 16, 2011
12:00 Noon

Good afternoon everyone. I would like to thank the Canadian Embassy and the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council, for hosting this forum. (Rear Admiral joke?)

At the FCC, we are focused on interoperability, and we have found a group that has proposed a bold technological step to deal with interoperability. You may have seen it, but I would like to show a two minute video of this innovative solution. The video is called “The Future of Radio Communications.” (YouTube Video - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_In-PBPb54U)

So, not a serious technological solution, but this clip highlights how difficult efficient, effective public safety communications can be. You may have

heard the quote, “Very often truth is revealed clothed in jest” and that’s true with this example. Public safety deals with a plethora of issues when dealing with interoperable communications. We know this and hope that by continuing a constructive, ongoing dialogue on the issues that affect public safety communications, we can make the commentary in this video a thing of the past.

I’m going to talk about interoperability in various public safety bands today, but before I do, I want everyone to think about what happened on 9/11, almost a decade ago. The lack of interoperable communications was a main contributor to the confusion, panic, and discord during and after the attack. Thus, achieving interoperability, in all public safety spectrums, should be our main priority so that

in the future we won't repeat the mistakes of that day. In this regard, we've been actively working to enhance domestic interoperability and promote cross-border interoperability with our Canadian partners. Together, we can make interoperable communications a reality including at our mutual borders.

Border Related Issues

NPSTC's efforts to improve all public safety communications are commendable especially with regards to cross-border communications. Our staff has informed me that members of NPSTC have been a driving force in seeking to ensure that first responders along the Canadian border in all frequency bands are able to: 1) communicate with

counterparts across the border; and 2) roam across the border with their mobile and portable radio equipment during the normal course of duty.

Rest assured that the Commission is actively working with the State Department to ensure that our agreements with Canada permit and encourage these types of cross-border communications. The Bureau staff will discuss this issue in further detail.

Furthermore, I am happy to report that recent negotiations with Industry Canada over agreements covering the 800 MHz and the 700 MHz bands have been completed at the staff level. Later, members of the Public Safety Bureau staff will provide you with additional information about these discussions but – *once finalized* – our agreements with Canada for these bands will:

- allow for completion of 800 MHz rebanding along the border; and
- enable public safety licensees to fully deploy narrowband systems at 700 MHz along the border.

800 MHz Rebanding Update (non-border)

I want to focus for a minute on a successful example of project which is improving interoperable public safety communications within the US; the 800 MHz rebanding project. Rebanding is significantly reducing interference and increasing the availability of spectrum for public safety by separating public safety licensees from licensees in the band who

operate commercial cellular systems. Here is a snapshot of where we are today:

- over 60 percent of public safety 800 MHz licensees have completed rebanding;
- 98 percent of Stage 1 licensees outside the Canada and Mexico borders have completed re-banding; and
- over 90 percent of Stage 2 licensees outside the Canada and Mexico borders have executed Frequency Reconfiguration Agreements with Sprint.

I anticipate that most remaining non-border Stage 2 licensees will complete rebanding by the end of 2011. However, some statewide and regional systems will take longer because of the

complexity of maintaining system operations and interoperability during the transition.

The Bureau has redoubled its efforts to keep the rebanding process moving. We have issued a number of orders disposing of contested cases since January. We've also intervened informally in some cases where negotiations were at an impasse. At this point, with so many Frequency Reconfiguration Agreements already negotiated, and decisions issued, I think there should be very few "new" issues holding up negotiations.

700 MHz Broadband Update

The 700 MHz broadband spectrum dedicated to public safety is a prime example and the "hot" topic

these days so let me give you an update with what the Commission is doing in this regard.

Achieving a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network is an important U.S. national priority and a longstanding goal of the Commission. It is also a high priority for NPSTC, its membership, and our international partners. The Commission's National Broadband Plan set forth a comprehensive framework for creating a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network and as such, the Plan recommended the creation of an Emergency Response Interoperability Center (ERIC), to ensure nationwide interoperability in the 700 MHz broadband spectrum.

The Commission has granted waivers to twenty-two public safety jurisdictions around the nation to pursue early deployment of regional public safety broadband networks. In granting waiver relief, the Commission recognized that expeditious deployment must not come at the expense of interoperability. Accordingly, the Commission imposed technical conditions and other requirements on these early-deployed networks to ensure interoperability amongst them, with the planned integration into a nationwide network to follow.

In January, we took an important step towards developing this nationwide network when the Commission adopted an Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking advancing a framework for

ensuring public safety broadband interoperability on a nationwide basis.

The order designates Long Term Evolution, or LTE, the broadband standard already adopted for waiver recipients' early-deployed networks, as the common technology platform for the network nationwide. An overwhelming consensus has emerged in support of this technology, both in the public safety community and in the commercial sector. The adoption of a common air interface for public safety broadband networks is an essential first step to ensuring nationwide interoperable broadband communications by public safety.

However, it is far from sufficient. Therefore, the further notice seeks comment on how to create a

technical framework while meeting public safety's unique requirements for secure, reliable, resilient communications. The comments cycle just closed and my staff is hard at work sifting through the voluminous record that has developed. A number of detailed, often highly technical comments have been filed and clearly there is widespread interest in ensuring that we get this network right from day one.

The Commission has also created two advisory bodies to help achieve interoperable broadband communications. The Technical Advisory Committee is composed of state and local government representatives with expertise in many technical issues ERIC is tasked to address. The second, the Public Safety Advisory Committee, or

PSAC, includes over sixty members from both the public safety community, including NPSTC, and the commercial sector. The purpose of this committee is to provide recommendations to ERIC and to the Commission on a broad array of policy matters relevant to interoperability. The PSAC's next meeting is scheduled next week on the 24th and is open to the public.

But let's not forget that there are 12 megahertz allocated to public safety in the 700 MHz for narrowband operations just waiting to be utilized by public safety. We should continue to deploy narrowband systems while we develop our broadband framework. Excuse the nautical expression but we need to continue moving both

ships in the same direction, towards nationwide interoperable public safety communications.

Furthermore, with regard to the Canada border, we are entering into discussions with Industry Canada over spectrum at 700 MHz designated for Public Safety Broadband use. These talks are preliminary right now, but should Canada allocate spectrum at 700 MHz for a Public Safety Broadband Network, we seek to ensure that our networks are interoperable from the “get-go.”

Narrowbanding

Now to a very serious topic, narrowbanding. As many of you know, in 2004 the FCC mandated all LMR systems operating in VHF and UHF must

transition their existing equipment for use within 25 kHz to 12.5 kHz or narrower bandwidth technology by 2013. Once completed, this migration will ensure more efficient use and greater spectrum access to the limited channels in these bands for public safety and non-public safety users.

We recognize that compliance with this mandate may require licensees to make significant system upgrades, including possible purchases of new radio equipment. Moreover, since the narrowbanding requirement applies to both public safety and non-public safety governmental entities operating in these bands, the January 2013 deadline could have significant budgetary implications.

To heighten awareness of the narrowbanding process and the upcoming deadline, we have been and will continue to reach out to public safety organizations such as NPSTC to help us assist licensees in completing this transition. Our collaboration with NPSTC, which included a narrowbanding questionnaire sent to your members greatly assisted us in gauging the level of compliance. In addition, your members have generously provided time and energy when we have asked for your assistance in our outreach efforts on this very important topic.

These outreach efforts have been extensive. Besides speaking about narrowbanding in various forums, we have set up a webpage (www.fcc.gov/narrowbanding) with important

information and updates, as well as links to resources that may be helpful to your members. We also maintain an e-mail box to which licensees can send their specific questions. That address is narrowbanding@fcc.gov, and it is a good way to reach our Bureau's subject matter experts on this topic.

The Bureau also recently sent a reminder letter to each public safety licensee that has not yet narrowbanded its system. This has led to numerous license modifications as well as cancellations.

These issues that I talked about today are extremely important to the safety and security of our nation, and to our neighboring countries, on a daily basis and even more so during times of natural or

manmade disasters. The FCC and the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau are working diligently to ensure that the nation has a robust public safety communications system that continues to function when other systems fail. We have seen what happens when it doesn't and it is simply not acceptable.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to public safety and for keeping the lines of communication open, literally and figuratively. I am honored to have been asked to be a part of your dialogue today and my promise to you is to keep the conversation going.

I am happy to take any questions you have.