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September 25, 2015

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

In April, the Federal Communication Commission released 3550 to 3700 MHz broadband frequencies, creating new wireless growth, Patrick Leary of Telrad said during the NEPA Broadband & Technology Summit Thursday.

Leary's mid-morning seminar called "From Props to Jets," was one of nine presented during the first NEPA Broadband & Technology Summit. The daylong event was held Thursday at the Convention Center at Mohegan Sun Pocono in Plains Township. SWG Inc., a wireless broadband equipment sales, repair and service provider headquarter in Olyphant, sponsored the event.

Greg Kopa, co-founder of SWG Inc., was expecting nearly 110 guests based on pre-registrations. The event highlighted the technology services provided locally as well as cutting-edge technology advances — such as the new broadband frequencies. "The FCC rarely releases spectrum," Leary, business development director for North America at Telrad said. "Releasing spectrum for general use is really rare. This spectrum is going to be almost as important as WiFi." Space on the spectrum can be purchased, "very cheaply," he told a crowd of 26.

Priority Access Licenses within the 3550 to 3650 MHz range will be available through a competitive bidding process, according to the FCC website. For more information about the bidding and requirements, visit www.fcc.gov. A low price tag combined with no interference that often affects WiFi will provide industries such as healthcare, energy companies and even small municipalities protected access to wireless broadband use. Small cities currently pay a wireless provider to link license plate readers, traffic cameras and parking meters, Leary said.

With the new capabilities of the new spectrum, small municipalities will have the ability to shed wireless provider bills and build their own network within the spectrum, he said. In a separate conference room, 12 vendors highlighted their services. They were: Site2 in Scranton; MBC Solutions in Moosic; Comcast Business in Duryea; PenTeleData in Palmerton; tech42 LLC in Dunmore; GST in Lee's Summit, Missouri; Intelpath in Hinsdale, Illinois; Ceragon, Little Falls New Jersey; Telrad based in Israel; and Xirrus in Boston, Massachusetts. — *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader*

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As France's Altice NV scoops up Cablevision Systems Corp. for \$17.7-billion (U.S.) amid a wave of mega-mergers in the U.S. cable industry, Canada's Cogeco Cable Inc. has its eye on smaller prey.

Cogeco started chasing small cable companies when it bought Quincy, Mass.-based Atlantic Broadband for \$1.36-billion in 2012. The move helped boost U.S. revenue to 22 per cent of the total, and Cogeco now leads major Canadian telecommunications

companies in foreign sales. Chief executive officer Louis Audet said Cogeco could double that number with more purchases. "We could build something as big if not bigger than what we have in Canada," Audet said in a Sept. 15 interview in Toronto. "It requires capital, it takes time and we won't do anything stupid, but the opportunities exist to do that."

After growing through small acquisitions for 30 years in Canada, Montreal-based Cogeco ran out of targets and began looking abroad. The company first expanded into Portugal, although it sold those assets at a loss a few months before acquiring Atlantic Broadband. It followed that deal up last month by buying MetroCast Communications of Connecticut LLC for \$200-million. "The reason we're in the

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U.S. is because there are acquisition opportunities of which there are no longer any meaningful ones in Canada," Mr. Audet said. "There are a lot of smaller companies that we can acquire."

The U.S. cable industry is going through a frenzy of a deals worth more than \$90-billion combined, which would reduce the top 10 largest players to just seven companies if completed. Charter Communications Inc. will jump to No. 2 with its purchases of Time Warner Cable Inc. and Bright House for a combined \$65-billion, while French billionaire Patrick Drahi's Altice will become No. 4 after buying Cablevision and spending \$9.1-billion for a controlling stake in St. Louis-based Suddenlink.

With the MetroCast deal, Atlantic Broadband moved up to No. 12 from No. 13 in the United States, with almost 250,000 cable subscribers in regions including Western Pennsylvania, Miami Beach and South Carolina. By comparison, Cablevision has about 2.6 million in the New York Tri-State area, and Time Warner Cable 10.8 million across the country. Cogeco's U.S. strategy is in contrast to larger rivals. BCE Inc., Rogers Communications Inc. and Telus Corp. generate their revenue almost exclusively from Canada. "The U.S. economy is doing a lot better than Canada, and on top of that, the currency exposure is beneficial," Greg MacDonald, a Toronto-based analyst with Macquarie Group Ltd., said in a telephone interview. "That's a major investment theme for a lot of portfolio managers."

The Canadian dollar has fallen 13 per cent in the past year against the greenback to 75 cents. Cogeco sold U.S. debt through Atlantic Broadband to help fund the MetroCast acquisition and could do so again for future acquisitions, chief financial officer Patrice Ouimet said. The deals activity in the United States has driven up valuations of cable companies around the world. Yet this won't affect Cogeco's targets, which are generally too small to get attention from the industry's biggest players, said Mr. MacDonald, the Macquarie analyst. – **Bloomberg**

Facebook Inc. 's Oculus virtual-reality unit is lining up additional content, including movies and games, ahead of the planned launch of its consumer headset early next year.

At a conference in Los Angeles Thursday, Oculus announced deals for streaming movies and TV shows from Netflix, games such as "Minecraft" and movies including "The Hunger Games" series, to make the technology more attractive for consumers. Facebook ponied up \$2 billion in cash and stock last year to buy Oculus VR, but the lack of content is a hurdle.

Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg told the approximately 1,500 conference attendees that the company "is committed to [virtual reality] for the long-term....We're going to work hard to serve this community." Mr. Zuckerberg has repeatedly said virtual reality will be the next major computing platform, making it possible to enjoy a courtside seat at a game or consult with a doctor face-to-face.

Oculus said Thursday it is working with Samsung Electronics Co. on a \$99 headset, expected to be available in November, that will work with Samsung's newest phones. A third device, the Oculus Touch, which will allow users to pick up objects and interact within a virtual reality world, is projected to be available in the second quarter of next year.

During the conference, Oculus executives said they had joined with Twentieth Century Fox and Lions Gate to bring movies to Oculus, in an attempt to re-create the experience of watching a movie on a big screen. Executives said more than 100 movies will be available from Fox, including the "Alien" trilogy, "Die Hard" and "Black Swan." (Fox's parent, 21st Century Fox, and News Corp, parent of The Wall Street Journal, were until mid-2013 part of the same company.)

Thursday's announcements will beef up the content available through virtual reality, mostly by adapting existing games, movies and shows to the format. Oculus Chief Technology Officer John Carmack said content is a big challenge right now. It's unclear how long mainstream audiences will be willing to wear headsets and stay within immersive experiences. Ron Bredow, an executive at Disney's Lucasfilm unit, said the company was experimenting with five- to 10-minute videos. "Is that going to be the kind of thing that's compelling enough as its own medium to hold your attention for two hours?" Mr. Bredow said at a conference session on Wednesday. "If the answer is yes, we haven't yet figured out all of the language of that sort of filmmaking to entertain people like that."

The Facebook-Oculus deal sparked broader interest in virtual reality from investors and content creators. Google Inc. and several venture funds last year invested \$542 million in augmented-reality firm Magic Leap Inc. Earlier this week, Walt Disney Co., Sky PLC and other global media firms invested \$65 million in a Silicon Valley virtual-reality startup, Jaunt, underscoring interest in the technology from entertainment companies.

Those players now must find ways to introduce the technology to mainstream audiences and encourage outsiders to develop content for virtual-reality headsets. Oculus was in talks last year to bring Minecraft to its headset, but the deal fell through after Facebook bought Oculus. Minecraft's founder at the time said he found Facebook "creepy." Minecraft later was acquired by Microsoft Corp.

Beyond the Oculus headsets, Facebook is supporting enhanced-reality technology in other ways. It plans to support 360-degree video within its news feed. It also is working on a stand-alone video app focused on virtual reality, people familiar with the project have told The Wall Street Journal.

Oculus in January launched a studio that has produced two movies: "Henry," [a cartoon about a lonely hedgehog](#) looking for friends, and "Lost," about a robot hand searching for its owner in a dense, dark forest. – *Wall Street Journal*



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