

July 26, 2011

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CKLN and LIME SIGN MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACT FOR DEDICATED CONNECTIVITY



CKLN's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Ken Sylvester (L) shakes hands with Mr. David Crawford (R), Chief Operations Officer for LIME after signing the contract. Witnessing the event was Hon. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada (second right) as well as other officials from LIME and the CKLN Board.



L-R: Ms. Veronica Flores, VP Capacity Sales, LIME, Mr. David Crawford, Chief Operating Officer, LIME, Dr. The Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell, Former Prime Minister of Grenada, Mr. Ken Sylvester, CEO of CKLN, Hon. Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada and Dr. Camella Rhone, Chairperson, CKLN Board

A major step towards the transformation and strengthening the region's tertiary institutions was taken on July 14, 2011 when negotiations between the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network, CKLN, and one of the region's largest telecommunications providers, LIME, culminated in the signing of a US\$6.3M contract in Grenada.

The region's first dedicated knowledge, learning and research network, C@ribNET, is a broadband fiber optic network, configured to connect tertiary institutions, hospitals, schools, government agencies and CARICOM institutions together, within the Caribbean. C@ribNET will also connect these institutions to similar institutions in Latin America, Europe, Africa, North America, and Asia.

The contract obligates LIME for a two-year period to provide high-end, upgradeable connectivity that will become the network of choice for education and research collaboration within the Caribbean. LIME agrees to provide top quality service to the region, putting the regional network on an equal footing with other networks in the international arena.

Mr. Ken Sylvester, CEO of the CKLN noted that the usefulness of the network relies on the functional cooperation among institutions and the programmes, courses and applications they develop and make available to users. "With a dedicated network in place, it is now up to the institutions and the public and private sector in each territory to foster the types of cooperation, the types of courses and programmes that Caribbean students can access in order to hone the skills and competencies necessary to strengthen regional economies."

The European Union provided funding for the project as part of its support for the establishment of the regional research & education network, consistent with CARICOM's commitment to assist Caribbean member states enhance their global competitiveness by upgrading and diversifying the skills and knowledge of human resources through greater regional collaboration and connectivity.

The EU has made significant investments in the tertiary education of the region over the last two decades. It is continuing such support both at country and regional level, with dedicated programmes linking ICT and education.

Mr. Sylvester said that partnering with LIME, as a telecommunications company with a longstanding history in the region and with their extensive infrastructure especially where beneficiary countries are concerned strengthens the potential for member states to utilise the network to enhance their global competitiveness.



CKLN EXPLORES APPLICATIONS

It is often thought that Librarians lead the charge to facilitate access to knowledge through the utilisation of new technologies. CKLN recently met with Senior Librarians, Archivists, and Information Officers from a range of institutions under the Library and Information Association of Jamaica (IAJA). The parties were eager to learn how C@ribNET would facilitate improved access to knowledge by their clientele. The Caribbean Disaster Information Network, CARDIN as well as the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and the Open Campus of the University of the West Indies have shown high interest in deepening collaboration and sharing through C@ribNET.

CKLN is currently working closely with its institutional partners to finalise the suite of applications that will be available when the network becomes operational, and to promote openness and functional collaboration. Educators, researchers, public servants, and others around the world interested in Caribbean culture, history, anthropology, geology, and other fields will have improved access to information.



Above: Signing the contract for the connectivity videoconferencing pilot project are (seated, L-R), Mr. Ken Sylvester, CEO of CKLN, Mr. James Pitt, Acting Manager, LIME Grenada, Mr. Sherwin Ragoonanan, representative of Fujitsu. Behind are Mr. Juan Bailey, Information Systems Manager, CKLN and Dr. Denis Paul, CKLN Board member.



Right: Dr. Jeffrey Britton, Principal of the T.A. Marryshow Community College (seated) witness's the signing of the contract.



The CKLN team, comprising Mr. David Edwards, Programme Manager, CKLN (centre), and Mr. Eriko Porto, Network Engineering Consultant, CKLN (right), was visiting Erdiston Teachers Training College in Barbados. Mr. Neil Lucas, Network Administrator at Higher Education Development Unit (HEDU) (left) facilitated their visit to this and a number of other facilities interested in connectivity through C@ribNET.

PILOT PROJECT ON DISTANCE EDUCATION

This project that was launched at the TA Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) in Grenada recently on July 12, 2011. Through an initiative facilitated by the CKLN, and with funds from the European Union, TAMCC is expanding its access to students through a dedicated connectivity videoconferencing project that will link the campus in the capital, St. George's, to those in the northernmost parish, St. Patrick, and to the sister island of Carriacou via electronic networks.

The initiative is aimed at demonstrating how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be used to bridge distances, enhance programme delivery, increase access in the tertiary education sector, improve efficiencies in use of resources, and create a platform for collaboration. It is anticipated that other tertiary level institutions in the Caribbean will follow suit, emboldened by the soon to be available C@ribNET connectivity that will allow institutions to collaborate and offer access to a larger number of potential learners and knowledge seekers.

Dr. Denis Paul, a member of the CKLN Board, said that this project should help to encourage and improve the education of students, noting that the work of CKLN is towards Information and Communication Technologies (ITC) transforming economies and enhancing global competitiveness.

CKLN has awarded contracts to LIME, for the provision of connectivity, and to FUJITSU, for the provision of videoconferencing equipment.

TECHNICAL VISITS TO BARBADOS AND TRINIDAD

A team from CKLN recently visited some tertiary institutions and other organisations in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. The visit was aimed at assessing readiness for connectivity to C@ribNET.

In Barbados, the team met with officials at the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI), the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), Erdiston Teachers Training College, Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, Barbados Community College, and the Caribbean Meteorological & Hydrology Institute (CMHI).

The meetings in Trinidad were held at the St Augustine campus of UWI, University of Trinidad and Tobago and the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTATT).