

The Bahama Journal

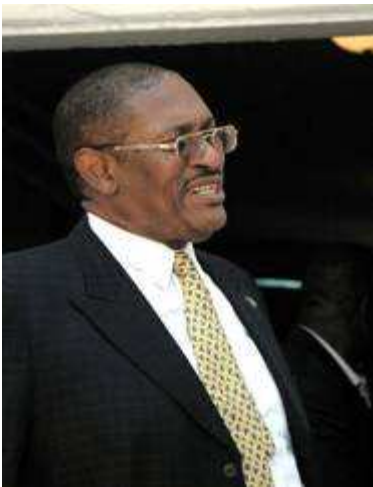
Telecommunications Project Extended To More Islands

April 26, 2006

<http://www.jonesbahamas.com/?c=47&a=8582>

Telecommunications Project Extended To More Islands

Minister of Works and Utilities Bradley Roberts announced Monday night that a \$60 million fiber optic cable system will be extended to Grand Cay, Moose Island and the Berry Islands.



*Minister of Works and
Utilities Bradley Roberts*

He also said that with a Ritz Carlton resort being developed on Rose Island, it is clear that the system would have to be extended there as well.

Last year, the Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC) entered into a contract with TYCO Telecommunications to install the fiber optic cable to connect 14 islands of The Bahamas. The system is known as the Bahamas Domestic Submarine Network International (BDSNi).

Minister Roberts announced that Phase I of the project has been completed. That phase includes the connection of New Providence to Inagua via Andros, Exuma, Long Island and Ragged Island.

Officials pointed out during the signing last year that the cable system that existed at the time was inadequate as the link capacity was exhausted and failed unremittingly.

When completed, the new system will be able to transmit more than 120,000 simultaneous phone calls using a pair of fiber optic spread embedded within a cable less than one inch in diameter.

Phase II of the project involves connecting Inagua to New Providence via Mayaguana, San Salvador, Rum Cay, Cat Island, Eleuthera, Abaco and Grand Bahama; and Phase III will allow BTC to connect the cable internationally.

Minister Roberts, who addressed the opening of the Atlantic Cable Maintenance and Repair Agreement (ACMA) Conference at the British Colonial Hilton Hotel on Monday night, also told delegates that in December 2005 he commissioned the Grand Bahama Fiber Optic Submarine Cable network, referred to as GBBSN.

This cable was constructed at a cost of \$6 million, he noted, saying that it was brought into service on budget and on time.

"With BDSNi and GBBSN, we have increased the reliability of inter-island and international communication tremendously," Minister Roberts told conference participants.

"I am further advised that this BDSNi is deployed in a self-healing ring topology to provide maximum redundancy minimizing the scenario where any of our islands will be left without proper communications but, if something still goes wrong, that's where you come in."

He noted that BTC, as a member in good standing with ACMA, relies on the services of that arrangement whenever something goes wrong in its submerged network.

"Over the years, the ACMA has provided stellar assistance to BTC," Minister Robert said.

Repeating sentiments expressed by Prime Minister Perry Christie during the signing of the BDSNi agreement, he said major developments in the country demand a commensurate telecommunications platform from which investors, international or local, are able to facilitate world-class communication services.

He told participants that in 2004 and 2005 hurricanes wreaked havoc on the country's point-to-point microwave radio communications system.

"Many of our islands went without proper communications for days on end; island communities were left with one or two satellite phones for government and emergency use and families which were unable to communicate to loved ones know that all so well," Minister Roberts said.

"No proactive government would allow that condition to continue."

It's why, he said, the government signed the BDSNi contract to embark on an exercise to link the islands with a submarine fiber optic cable that would facilitate the world-class connectivity required.

The new technology will allow BTC to deploy GSM cellular technology and DSL high speed Internet services on even the most remote Bahamian island, according to BTC and government officials.

BTC Chairman Reno Brown said during the signing last year that the project is economically justifiable and would ensure a more robust telecommunications network to meet the National Disaster Recovery Plan.

According to officials, the BDSNi system will have enough capacity to serve current needs as well as significant future balance requirements.

It is forecasted that the entire BDSNi, including the spur from Matthew Town, Inagua to Port-au-Prince, Haiti will be completed by the end of August, Minister Roberts told participants of the ACMA conference.

The conference ends on Friday.