

Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation

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April 10, 2025

Press Release: Starlink Program Funding Unavailable and Repercussions on Access to Justice for Remote Indigenous Communities

To the Press,

The Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation (NALSC) would like to advise that its Starlink-Navigator Program has not received funding from the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) for the 2025/26 fiscal year, as it has in previous years. Without funding, NALSC is unable to assist members of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, who are living in and/or are from remote northern Ontario First Nation communities, with attending virtual court.

While funded, the Starlink-Navigator Program allowed NALSC to provide reliable internet access to assigned court locations in remote communities in Northern Ontario. This permitted community members, who often do not have access to internet, or reliable internet, an opportunity to participate in virtual courts, which are commonly scheduled in remote communities for convenience or necessity. The Starlink-Navigator Program, when funded, assisted between 5 to 80 individuals attend virtual court per session, across 29 separate court locations.

NALSC believes it is imperative that the public, but especially the citizens of northern Ontario, are aware of this unfortunate situation, as it impacts individuals navigating the Court process, as well as all stakeholders of the Criminal Justice System, i.e., the community at large. Without funding to this critical program, it is anticipated that, alongside ancillary effects, many individuals will be unable to participate in the court process when their respective court is proceeding virtually.

A lack of funding for the Starlink-Navigator Program will further strain an already overburdened legal system. Communities should expect to see an increased cost to complete matters, as the inability to facilitate virtual court appearances will delay legal proceedings.

Despite not securing continued funding for the 2025/26 fiscal year, NALSC would like to advise that we have done, and will continue to do all that is possible in assisting NAN members. We have provided each of the court location with up-to-date technology, and Starlink Wi-Fi service through FSET until January of 2026. Starlink equipment in NAN

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communities was purchased by NALSC but ultimately belongs to the Chief and Council of the First Nations in which they are located. Chief and Council can give direction & or permission to anyone in the community to run Starlink should they have the capacity to do so.

NALSC is committed to providing access to justice and believes the public should be aware of the termination of funding for the Starlink-Navigator Program; as often mentioned by the Judiciary, "*justice delayed is justice denied*", which should be of concern to all the citizens of northern Ontario.

NALSC eagerly awaits the opportunity to resume assisting the administration of justice throughout Northern Ontario with the Starlink-Navigator Program. Should there be a change in circumstances, we will advise accordingly.

Sincerely,



Chantelle Johnson
A/Executive Director
Nishnawbe-Aski Legal Services Corporation

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