

Alcatel Wins Contract ^[1]

Submitted by Rory Lattimer Thu, 2005-10-20 00:00

The University of Victoria has signed a \$39-million Cdn contract with Alcatel to design, manufacture and install the infrastructure for NEPTUNE Canada's cabled ocean observatory off Vancouver Island. The largest single contract awarded in UVic's history involves sub-contracts with Nautronix MariPro in California and Satlantic in Halifax .

"This contract represents a major step forward in realizing the start of this long-anticipated and revolutionary project," says UVic President Dr. David Turpin. "UVic is proud to partner with Alcatel. Their participation on NEPTUNE Canada brings us another step closer to activating the world's largest, cable-linked underwater observatory and building on UVic's recognized leadership in oceans research."

UVic is the lead Canadian institution for NEPTUNE Canada (North-East Pacific Time-series Undersea Network Experiments) which will revolutionize ocean research by transmitting images and data instantly to shore where they will be relayed to researchers, educational institutions, science centres and the public via the Internet. By operating 24 hours a day for about 25 years, NEPTUNE will provide a better understanding of plankton blooms, fish migrations, ocean climate change, underwater volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and the processes that cause them, and help warn about approaching tsunamis.

Alcatel will provide the cable, observatory control centres or "nodes" and associated shore station equipment for an 800 kilometre looped cable system. The cables will be buried across the narrow continental shelf and will lie on the seabed at a depth of up to 3,000 metres in the open ocean. The cable, landing at the UVic-owned Port Alberni shore station, will deliver power and Internet connection to the major observatory nodes enabling land-based scientists to access and control scientific sensors and remotely-operated vehicles and cameras. The installation of the observatory backbone will provide opportunities for the B.C. marine technology sector to provide and develop a wide range of marine environmental sensors and for other companies to develop and market data products and services.

"We are proud to support the University of Victoria in such an ambitious project," says Jean Godeluck, president of Alcatel's submarine network activity. "Submarine cables' ability to transport large volumes of optical data and sufficient amounts of power, together with their high reliability and versatility, make them good candidates for the new applications offered in the field of undersea scientific observation. This new award confirms our expertise in

addressing new market segments."

Previous Alcatel submarine systems were anchored and controlled at either end by shore stations. The NEPTUNE infrastructure will transmit data from deep water to shore, and this contract recognizes Alcatel's ability to conduct breakthrough design. "This project combines terrestrial, telecommunications and submarine technology," says NEPTUNE Canada's project director Dr. Chris Barnes. "Given the remoteness of the nodes and the depth of the cable, the infrastructure must be extremely reliable since conducting repair work would be costly and very complicated."

"Alcatel already has experience in adapting its technologies to meet the special requirements of cabled observatories, having been involved with the MARS (Monterey Accelerated Research System) deep-water test-bed at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institution in California," says Peter Phibbs, NEPTUNE's associate director of engineering and operations. "Development of technology for NEPTUNE will be very challenging, but I'm confident that Alcatel will be ready to install the system in mid-2007 and that observatory instruments will be undertaking experiments by the start of 2008."

NEPTUNE is a joint U.S.-Canada venture, led in Canada by UVic and funded by \$62.4 million from the [Canada Foundation for Innovation](#) [2] and the [B.C. Knowledge Development Fund](#) [3]. During stage two, the project's U.S. partners will expand the underwater system into American waters and complete the coverage over the entire Juan de Fuca tectonic plate.

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