



## **METRO TORONTO CONVENTION CENTRE UNVEILS WORLD'S FIRST LARGE SCALE ROUTED WIRELESS NETWORKING INSTALLATION**

TORONTO, January 6, 2004 – The Metro Toronto Convention Centre (MTCC) today unveiled its new wireless local area network (WLAN), a large scale solution based on a routed IP architecture. This unique application of wireless networking technology makes the MTCC a world leader in wireless capability for convention organizers and attendees. The MTCC WLAN will be able to provide guaranteed seamless and continuous wireless service to over 1,000 simultaneous mobile users.

“This installation is a truly revolutionary new technology. It’s smarter than most wireless networks and combined with WLAN virtualization it can deliver unprecedented levels of scalability and availability,” according to Bill McDonald, Director of Technology Services for the MTCC.

“The wireless network backbone we have developed will allow us to provide clients with Internet access and networking capability, our staff with access to our corporate network, and a wireless portable telephone system – all on a single antenna infrastructure,” he added. “Our customers have diverse data networking and wireless expectations, and our goal is to meet or exceed these expectations.”

Recognizing that demand for wireless connectivity has exploded over the past year from both convention attendees and organizers eager to use their new wireless enabled laptops and Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), the MTCC, in collaboration with Massachusetts-based Chantry Networks ([www.chantrynetworks.com](http://www.chantrynetworks.com)), came up with an innovative new WLAN. The Chantry development centre in Mississauga, which worked closely with the MTCC, designed a solution specifically for large convention centre use.

“There’s no question that the race is on for top convention centres and other venues to provide wireless access as the latest “must-have” event amenity,” says Bruce MacMillan, President & CEO, Tourism Toronto. “With an increasingly competitive market, in a challenging economy, attracting top events is vital to every city’s continuing fiscal health. After location, amenities are the top priority – and nearly every business-focused event today demands full wireless access throughout their chosen venue’s exhibit hall and meeting rooms. We think the MTCC has made a great investment here.”

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Chantry's BeaconWorks™ solution is ideally suited to the MTCC site, which has a huge physical area to cover – more than 2 million square feet of space spread out over six city blocks.

“The MTCC wanted and needed a cost-effective and efficient wireless system, one that would have a low total cost of ownership and was scalable,” explains Peter N. Vicars, President and CEO of Chantry Networks. “Our BeaconWorks solution is ideal for the convention centre environment.

“With BeaconWorks' IP-routed architecture, the MTCC doesn't have to install new switches in each wiring distribution closet across the site and with BeaconWorks' virtualization capabilities, they can have separate “networks” for exhibitors, conference attendees, and staff – with different sets of access policies and privileges – all over one single physical network. The overall solution not only met MTCC's basic needs for wireless access, but also provides added services for a competitive advantage and potential new revenue streams.”

The new WLAN will offer users many benefits, not the least of which will be Internet access speeds of up to 54 Mbps, which is close to 1,000 times faster than conventional dial-up. Exhibitors, for example, will enjoy full-time high speed roaming access to the Internet to display their web sites, do online ordering, and connect to their company networks back home, all from their laptops or PDAs anywhere on the Show floor.

Similarly, convention staff and organizers will be able to have their own WLANs to handle all administrative tasks, including the registration process, and communications with their head office and each other. Speakers will also have continuous online access to their presentations and the Internet as they move from room to room.

For convention attendees or Show visitors, the new WLAN will make it easy to keep in touch too. They will be able to buy limited access to the Internet in the form of a one- or 24-hour access card for use with any portable device that has the current international wireless standard (IEEE802.11 A/B/G). With this card, they will be able to check their email and surf the web from any public space in the facility.

Hot spots will also offer attendees a place to gather and work outside the Exhibit Hall where the wireless signal is especially strong. Internet kiosks will enable attendees without a laptop or PDA to check their e-mail while waiting for their next session.

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In addition, the MTCC will host its own 'splash page', a captive portal which will allow attendees limited free access to certain areas, including the Show meeting schedule, other Show communications, the MTCC's official web site, and links to official partners. The portal will also be a way for Show organizers and exhibitors to invite attendees to participate in contests, customer surveys and polls.

For the MTCC's own staff, wireless access to the Centre's in-house software programs will be a real time saver by offering them desk tools on the go. Sales staff, for example, will be able to call up information instantly, such as room availability, contracts and quotes from anywhere in the building while giving a tour to a prospective client. In early 2004, the MTCC also plans to provide a wireless in-building telephone system based on voice over IP for both staff and show attendees.

"We're very excited about the many possibilities of this new technology," says McDonald. "It's very cutting edge and I can already see how it will form the MTCC's next generation telecommunications network infrastructure."

The Metro Toronto Convention Centre is Canada's largest convention and trade facility and hosts more than 700 events annually, ranging in size from large international conventions to small local corporate meetings, for groups of 40 to 40,000. Located in downtown Toronto, the convention centre has a total of 460,000 square feet of flexible exhibit space and more than 2 million square feet of total space.

The MTCC hosts dozens of different events each year, with varying exhibitors and attendees. Premier events held at the convention centre include: Toronto International Auto Show, Comdex Canada, PDAC Show and Real World Linux 2004.

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**Attachment:** Technical Backgrounder About the MTCC's New WLAN



## **TECHNICAL BACKGROUNDER ABOUT THE MTCC'S NEW WLAN**

Based on Chantry's BeaconWorks technology, the MTCC's new WLAN involves just one enterprise-class router – the BeaconMaster controller -- and a variety of antennae – the BeaconPoint access points.

The controller is a high performance, fully functioning router that provides centralized intelligence and enables the MTCC's system administrators to manage and even upgrade the system via the Internet.

“Network management is easy,” says Chris Taylor, the MTCC's telecommunications manager. “I manage the wireless network right from my desktop through a secure Web page. There's no walking to each access point and making changes or adjustments to each antenna's brain when there's a problem. All the information comes right into the central router.”

The access points also use plug and play technology, which meant that the MTCC did not have to go to the time and expense of building a separate wireless network with individual switches across the facility. Instead, each BeaconPoint antenna was plugged in to the Centre's existing extensive fibre optic network and automatically discovered the BeaconMaster. More access points can be added anywhere on the MTCC's wired network to increase wireless coverage in minutes. Currently, the MTCC has installed 25 access points.

This is quite different from most current wireless LANs, which involve a “warehouse” solution based on older technology. In these networks, multiple access points or antennae are required and each one is designed to cover only a specific area and a small number of users. When a user walks from one access point to another, or to an access point on a different sub network, the user will be required to re-connect and re-authenticate each time. This technology is simply not designed to be used by convention centres where many people move about over large spaces, and so its limitations make it a less than perfect fit for large conventions and shows such as those using the MTCC.

A key feature of the new WLAN is known as “virtualization”, which enables the MTCC to securely partition its wireless network into as many as 50 separate virtual sub-networks so that individual user groups can send and receive encrypted transmissions without fear of a security breach. The single WLAN infrastructure still exists, but is segmented exclusively by policy rather than physical network location to meet the needs of various classes of user, regardless of the size or complexity of the event.