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## **Northern [Sp]Arc - Theory and Practice in Rural & Far-North Regional Economic Development**

CTMI, the managing partner of the World Chambers Network (WCN) which counts over 10,000 communities and 13,000 chambers of commerce in 160+ countries in its proprietary databases that serve over 40 million members, is preparing to expand its service palette and clientele beyond chambers. This applies not only to businesses in large metro areas that are not chamber members (depending on the relevant jurisdiction) but also to rural areas, as well as remote Northern places where the term 'metro area' is simply irrelevant.

Following earlier WCN chamber data-only clusters that focused on 'Northern Circumpolar' chambers only, 'Northern [Sp]Arc is scheduled to add a variety of business services in Q4 2017, following completion of related pilot project surveys and travel. This includes GBX short-term business opportunity listings, ChamberTrust verification seals (with options for monthly press releases by a business), CTMI secure, auto-notarized trade documentation services (with emphasis on transportation), and other services for business. It will also provide major space for Local and Regional Economic Development initiatives.

Joachim Knauf, CEO & President of CTMI & WCN, said that “CTMI is examining 'practice-tested' approaches to digital global commerce tools for businesses and NGOs in far-away and remote places in rural and Northern Canada as a pilot project for the remote Northern hemisphere ...how can a sophisticated digital backbone that was developed to serve Paris, New York, Shanghai and Toronto be expanded and modified to also take into consideration the unique challenges and requirements of rural, remote and Northern communities.”

Following an extended on-the-ground tour by CTMI staff that covered over 11,000km of rural and Northern communities for Canada as the pilot project area, Mr. Knauf added that “the 'connectivity issues' emerged as a major priority - both in terms of overall availability and also reliability - for many of the communities.” Therefore, CTMI has been modifying the upcoming offerings that they include more extensive hosting options as well.

Northern [Sp]Arc is designed to benefit as many businesses as possible. Nevertheless, the expectations are that transportation, ecotourism, indigenous cultural activities, arts and crafts, resource development and 'green'-tech supporting 'local markets' (i.e. new energy supplies, potential greenhouse activities) will initially be the prime users, perhaps along with the increasing number of scientists who focus on the impact of changing climate.

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