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Atlantic Broadband said it is now the 12th largest cable operator in the United States thanks to its just-completed acquisition of MetroCast from Harron Communications for \$200 million. Announced in June, the closing of the deal solidifies Atlantic Broadband's owner, Canada's Cogeco Cable, as a notable player in the U.S. cable market.



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"Nearly three years after our initial entry into the U.S. market, we are pleased to be continuing our geographic expansion into key growth markets," said Louis Audet, president and CEO of Cogeco, who entered the U.S. market with its 2012 purchase of Atlantic Broadband's 251,000 subscribers in Western Pennsylvania, Southern Florida, Maryland, Delaware and South Carolina. "This transaction enhances our growth profile through the planned launch of new residential services such as TiVo and Metro Ethernet for businesses."

MetroCast's Connecticut network, which passes 70,000 homes and businesses across nine communities in Eastern Connecticut, services 23,000 TV, 22,000 Internet and 8,000 phone customers. With those additions, Atlantic Broadband now counts around 246,000 total customers.

In its most recent financial report for the period ending May 31, Cogeco said its U.S. cable operations lost 938 TV customers during its fiscal third quarter, a slight improvement over the 1,599 it lost in the same period last year. The company blamed the declines on the "competitive offers in the industry, partly offset by the growth of TiVo's digital advanced television services launched during the first quarter of fiscal 2014." The company said it added 4,407 Internet subscribers in its most recent quarter, up from 3,990 in the year-ago period, "mainly due to the launch of TiVo's services, additional marketing initiatives which focused on bundle package offerings, thus increasing overall demand for the HSI [high speed Internet] residential services as well as increased commercial HSI customers." The company said fully 59 percent of its customers subscribed to two or more of its services during the period; 21 percent

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subscribed to all three of its services (TV, Internet and telephony).

As for the financials of the company's U.S. cable business, Cogeco reported that its U.S. cable revenues rose almost 20 percent year-over-year to almost \$20 million in its fiscal third quarter due to what the company said was "favorable foreign exchange rates compared to the same period last year, PSU growth as well as rate increases implemented during the first quarter of fiscal 2015."

Interestingly, Atlantic Broadband is one of the more progressive cable operators in the country in terms of embracing OTT rivals. The company announced in 2014 it would integrate Netflix into its offering, giving customers up to three months of free Netflix if their sign up for one of the MSO's TiVo bundles. And earlier this year, the company said it would also integrate Hulu into its services. – *Fierce Cable*

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Verizon shorts municipalities on their cable franchise fees by not including late payment fees in its revenue calculations, Monroeville and two other municipalities claim in a proposed class-action lawsuit filed Friday in federal court. Monroeville, along with West Bradford and East Brandywine in Chester County, are suing Verizon Communications Inc. and its Pennsylvania subsidiary on behalf of all franchising authorities in the state.

Monroeville Solicitor Bruce Dice referred questions to Dan Cohen, one of the lawyers representing the municipalities in the lawsuit. Cohen and Verizon representatives couldn't be reached for comment. Cable franchise fees accounted for about \$560,000 of Monroeville's \$31.9 million 2015 budget. The municipality gets 5 percent of the annual gross revenues that Verizon gets from cable business in Monroeville's boundaries, the lawsuit says.

The franchise contract includes late payment fees in the definition of gross revenue but the company has systematically underreported those fees, the lawsuit says. The lawsuit doesn't provide an estimate of how much the company collects in late fees. The municipalities are seeking recovery of the underpaid fees plus damages. – *triblive.com*

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The Internet is the biggest platform for innovation and creativity the world has ever seen. It has revolutionized the way we communicate, research, entertain ourselves and do business. These changes have come about so quickly because, among other reasons, Internet service has been free of the taxation that boosts consumer costs for other forms of telecommunications.

Back in 1998, Congress recognized the importance of an unfettered Internet and passed the temporary, bipartisan Internet Tax Freedom Act, which bans taxes on Internet access for consumers. The legislation has been extended five times — sometimes retroactively or right before expiration — and, unless Congress acts again, the moratorium will expire Oct. 1. That can't be allowed to happen. The last thing Americans need is more taxes, particularly on their Internet service when Washington is already doing all it can to damage the Internet through "net neutrality" and other initiatives.

If Washington, states and localities were able to tax Internet service the same way they tax cellphone plans — typically at a combined rate of at least 17 percent — families and small businesses would notice the hit to their finances. Governments at every level have managed to continue growing despite their inability to tax Internet service for two decades. Why would we want them to start now? It's not like they need the money to regulate Internet service providers.

Taxing Internet access would hamper the spread of broadband to rural areas, as well. Geography shouldn't prevent Americans from taking advantage of all the benefits the Internet has to offer. Thankfully, for these reasons and others, the House of

Representatives has passed the common-sense Permanent Internet Tax Freedom Act. If the Senate follows suit and passes a stand-alone bill — separate from the misleadingly named Marketplace Fairness Act, which would require Internet retailers to collect sales taxes on all purchases — the feds, states and local governments would be prevented from piling the same taxes people see on their telephone and cellphone bills onto their Internet bills.

Americans have benefited greatly from having no tax burden on the Internet. Congress should make Internet service tax-free for good before Oct. 1. — ***Las Vegas Review-Journal*** editorial



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