
News Release

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TO PROVIDE BROADBAND FOR 21 B.C. FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

Victoria, British Columbia, March 6, 2009 — Mr. John Duncan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians, today announced that the Government of Canada will contribute \$7.86 million to the First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) and their partner, the First Nations Technology Council (FNTC) in British Columbia, for the construction and provision of satellite broadband network capacity connecting 21 remote First Nations communities in British Columbia.

“Broadband infrastructure contributes to the economic growth and prosperity of communities, and enhances quality of life,” said Mr. Duncan. “This project will have positive impacts on several issues facing remote communities, including improved access to health and distance education services, and electronic government services and e-commerce.”

The funding will help bring enhanced broadband access to more than 2,700 residents living in 21 communities in remote British Columbia. Broadband access will be delivered to homes, band offices, schools, health centres and businesses. The service will improve the delivery of health, education, and other government services, as well as providing additional benefits such as helping to ensure cleaner water through remote water quality monitoring. The FNESS is working closely with OmniGlobe Networks, its broadband and satellite provider and financial partner, on the delivery of high-speed broadband Internet access to these communities.

Grand Chief Edward John, a champion of the need for improved connectivity in First Nations communities and a member of the First Nations Summit political executive, noted that “While improved connectivity in all BC First Nations communities is a priority, we are extremely pleased that some of our most remote and disadvantaged communities will receive broadband connectivity as a result of today’s announcement. The provision of broadband connectivity in these communities will ultimately lead to improved access to healthcare, education and economic development opportunities. We applaud the partnership that made this project possible and thank Canada for their important and on-going commitment to improved connectivity for First Nations communities.”

“We are glad to see remote B.C. First Nation communities will finally gain access to much needed services, information and training that would otherwise be unavailable,” said Mr. Blaine Wiggins, Executive Director of FNESS.

The new broadband service involves the installation of satellite earth stations, local access networks, and broadband satellite capacity.

The FNESS has been serving the First Nations communities of British Columbia for more than twenty years. Focusing on fire services and fire prevention, crisis intervention, emergency preparedness and emergency response, and environmental services, FNESS assists in developing and sustaining safer and healthier First Nations communities.

The FNNTC is mandated to bring broadband and related technologies to all BC First Nations and to ensure that all users have the necessary skills to use technology to improve their lives and that all communities have qualified, affordable, accessible technical support.

Today’s announcement is consistent with the Government of Canada’s unprecedented \$33-billion plan to help meet infrastructure needs across Canada. Moreover, Canada’s Economic Action Plan includes the acceleration and expansion of recent historic federal investments in infrastructure with almost \$12 billion in new infrastructure stimulus funding over two years.

For further information on the Building Canada plan, visit www.buildingcanada.gc.ca

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