

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEONET SELECTED AS A NORTHERN ONTARIO BROADBAND CHAMPION

Timmins, Ontario — On October 28th 2005 the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Minister of State (FedNor), together with Northern Ontario Members of Parliament linked by videoconference, announced FedNor support of more than \$1.8M to four regional non-profit organizations that will champion the development of broadband services and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) throughout Northern Ontario.

Minister Mitchell also announced that, in addition to the \$10 million commitment to broadband development it made in April, FedNor would commit a further \$10 million in funding over the next three years to support applications that make effective use of the broadband network. Such applications could include distance education and videoconferencing, telehealth suites for distant patient consultations, Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS) that store and distribute digital scans and X-rays, and online financial networking and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for local governments and emergency services.

“The selection of these regional champions continues FedNor’s efforts to extend broadband availability throughout Northern Ontario,” said Minister Mitchell. “As well, the commitment of \$10 million to foster applications will make sure that this broadband access is put to the fullest and best possible use. Both these announcements demonstrate that the Government of Canada is dedicated to investing in technology that enhances the ability of all residents to interact, transact, learn, access critical information and services, and improve their economic and social well being.”

NEOnet will receive \$498,000 over the next three years to continue its work on behalf of over 60 rural communities with low population densities. Christy Marinig – Chair of NEOnet’s Board of Directors – took part in the videoconference accepting FedNor’s contribution on behalf of NEOnet. “FedNor’s contribution enables us to continue to work on improving information and communications technology in Northeastern Ontario,” said Marinig.

NEOnet will undertake a number of initiatives, including the identification of broadband gaps, support for ICT application initiatives, and the coordination of the development of broadband services in unserved or under-served areas. NEOnet will work with communities, governments and other organizations along with the private sector to develop cost-effective and sustainable broadband solutions capable of fostering education, health, government, and business applications. NEOnet will also assist communities and rural businesses without broadband access to install and deploy necessary infrastructure for backbone connections that bring the service to a community, referred to as Points of Presence (PoPs).

Connecting Northeastern Ontario communities is only one aspect of NEOnet's mission. NEOnet believes in a 3-pillar approach to technology development: infrastructure, applications and awareness. "We believe this is the most effective way to move things forward, and the 3 year funding announced today will ensure that we can keep building on these 3 pillars within the communities. Within the next few years, we hope to have all of our communities connected to the rest of the world," Marinig said.

To find out more about NEOnet, visit us at: <http://www.neonet.on.ca>

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For more information please contact:

Stéphane Gallant
Director of Operations
NEOnet
(705) 360 – 1353 ext 2
sgallant@neonet.on.ca