
News Release

FEDNOR ANNOUNCES NORTHERN ONTARIO BROADBAND CHAMPIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITMENT

HUNTSVILLE, Ontario, October 28, 2005 —The Honourable Andy Mitchell, Minister of State (FedNor), together with Northern Ontario Members of Parliament linked by videoconference, today announced FedNor support of more than \$1.8M (\$1,820,775) to four regional non-profit organizations that will champion the development of broadband services and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) throughout Northern Ontario. The choice of the regional champions represents a significant step forward in the \$10-million FedNor commitment, announced April 22nd, 2005, to bring broadband access to every community in Northern Ontario.

Minister Mitchell also announced that FedNor will 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.”

The four non-profit champion organizations selected through a competitive process are: the Blue Sky Economic Growth Corporation (BSEGC), serving an area from Manitoulin Island to North Bay, which will receive \$499,675; the Northeastern Ontario Communications Network Inc.(NEOnet), serving Cochrane and Timiskaming Districts and west to Chapleau, which will receive \$498,000; K-Net, the ITC division of Keewatinook Okimakanak Tribal Council, serving First Nations across Northern Ontario, which will receive \$472,000; and the Muskoka Community Network (MCN), serving the Parry Sound and Muskoka area, which will receive \$351,100. The champions will cooperate in making sure all currently unserved communities, both within and outside their respective service areas, receive broadband access.

In each case, the regional champion 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. The champions 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. They 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). It is estimated that slightly more than 75 communities in Northern Ontario currently have no access to broadband service.

The spread of broadband in Canada and Northern Ontario is helping businesses in smaller communities and remote areas enter the global economy, research market data and offer specialized products and services to a large marketplace.

In Northern Ontario, health networks such as the NORTH Network are accelerating the exchange of medical data between hospitals, clinics and doctors, and allowing consultations and patient diagnosis over vast distances. Additionally, FedNor has supported the implementation of Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS) that store and distribute digital scans and X-rays in over 40 hospitals across Northern Ontario.

Since 1999, FedNor has contributed \$49.6 million toward “connectedness” projects, including \$23.1 million for telecommunications infrastructure and networking projects, and \$26.5 million toward information and communications technology (ICT) applications, promotion and development. As well as working closely with the Broadband for Rural and Northern Development Pilot Program (BRAND) and First Nations SchoolNet, FedNor itself in the last eight years has established Points of Presence serving more than 100 Northern Ontario communities.

Funding for this initiative was provided for in the February 2005 federal budget and is therefore built into the existing fiscal framework.

To find out more about FedNor, visit us at: <http://fednor.ic.gc.ca>

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