

Subject: Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia update - December 5, 2007

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From: Nova Scotia Economic Development NSED <COMM@gov.ns.ca>

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Conversation: Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia update - December 5, 2007

Project Update - December 5, 2007

The province has signed contracts with Internet service providers, taking Nova Scotia one step closer to becoming the most connected jurisdiction in all of North America by the end of 2009.

Premier Rodney MacDonald announced today, Dec. 5, in Canaan, Lunenburg Co., that contracts have been awarded to Bragg Communications Inc. (EastLink) and Seaside Communications to provide access to high-speed Internet services.

"Improving our infrastructure is one of government's five immediate priorities to help us reach our new Nova Scotia, and 100 per cent access to broadband is a vital piece," said Premier MacDonald. "It will help every Nova Scotian business compete internationally with other businesses, it will give every Nova Scotian student access to the same educational tools, and it will generally improve the lifestyle of every citizen regardless of where they are located in our great province."

The \$74.5-million broadband initiative, which touches all counties and a number of business sectors, is being cost shared by the provincial and federal governments and the successful service providers. The provincial contribution is \$19.6 million. The federal contribution is a maximum of \$14.5 million under the Building Canada infrastructure plan. The shared cost to the companies will be \$40.4 million.

"It is vital that rural schools, health clinics, businesses and citizens have timely access to essential services and research facilities to keep Nova Scotia globally competitive," said Angus MacIsaac, Economic Development Minister. "Access to high-speed Internet will help our communities become even more attractive to new businesses, skilled workers and young professionals who can raise their families in the comfort of rural communities with many of the same advantages as urban centres."

More than 200,000 Nova Scotians, 93,500 dwellings, 213 schools, and

5,600 businesses do not have broadband service. The Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia initiative will close this gap completely.

Seaside Communications will cover Cumberland, Colchester, Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough, Inverness, Richmond, Victoria and Cape Breton counties.

"We've been in the communications business for 31 years and welcome this project as a wonderful fit for our expertise in wireless Internet," said Irving Schwartz, president of Seaside Communications. "We completed the successful pilot project earlier this year, which gives us firm footing in knowing how to approach the special needs of the rural areas and communities covered by our contract."

EastLink has signed contracts to provide service to Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis, Kings and Hants counties.

"EastLink is pleased to partner with the government of Nova Scotia to achieve the goal of providing 100 per cent coverage to underserved areas," said Lee Bragg, co-CEO of EastLink. The wireless high-speed service will result in a significantly improved Internet experience over dial-up."

Halifax Regional Municipality, which includes 45 rural communities, is a unique area and was awarded earlier this year under a separate procurement process managed by the municipality. The province is working with the municipality to complete negotiations and ensure there is 100 per cent broadband coverage for all of rural HRM by the end of 2009. An announcement for the region will be made at a later date.

Cathy Pipe, a resident of Lorneville, Cumberland Co., has lived with dial-up Internet for many years. Last February, she became part of the broadband pilot project.

"High-speed Internet will open up new avenues for people of all ages and walks of life -- from farmers, to entrepreneurs to students," said Ms. Pipe. "Updating programs takes seconds and accessing large websites is a breeze."

About EastLink

Operating from its headquarters in Halifax, Nova Scotia, EastLink is the fifth largest cable company in Canada and the first to offer local

telephone service over a state-of-the-art digital network. EastLink is one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies and provides a range of communications, entertainment and advertising services to business and residential customers across the Maritimes. For more information on EastLink and its products and services, visit www.eastlink.ca.

About Seaside Communications

Seaside Communications, locally-owned by Irving Schwartz, has been in business in Cape Breton since 1976 and currently provides analog and digital cable services. The company has a current customer base of more than 12,000 cable customers and 4,000 high speed Internet clients from Richmond and Victoria Counties in Cape Breton, as well as Cumberland County on the mainland.

For Seaside customer and rural inquiries, please contact Joanne Oldford by phone at (902) 842-1177, Ext. 319 or Toll Free: 1-877-842-1177, Ext. 319 or by email at joanneo@seaside.ns.ca

For information about Seaside visit www.seasidewireless.ns.ca or to send an email requesting more information, please go to <http://www.seasidewireless.com/contact.html>

About Broadband for Rural Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia government's broadband initiative will ensure that by the end of 2009, every Nova Scotian will have broadband access to the Internet. In many cases, that broadband access will be achieved through wireless connectivity.

Access to broadband service is as important today as paved roads, electricity and telephones were in the past. We need it to communicate, to access information, and to conduct business. The goal is to make Nova Scotia the most connected area in all of North America. For more information, please visit www.gov.ns.ca/econ/broadband/.

