

*April 20, 2011*

## **Connecting rural Alberta to the world**

*Edmonton...* The Alberta government is taking another step to ensure reliable broadband Internet access is available to every Alberta home.

The province will provide \$9.7 million to leverage the federal government's Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians program. Announced last year, the program will bring broadband Internet access to an estimated 41,000 rural Alberta households currently without broadband service or in underserved areas of the province.

"Access to high-speed Internet means Albertans can reach out, explore market opportunities for specialty products to a worldwide customer base, or participate in online, interactive videoconferencing from their home," said Jack Hayden, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

In May 2010, Industry Canada awarded a contract to Corridor Communications Inc. through an open, nationwide competition to build and operate broadband infrastructure in five rural and remote areas in Alberta. The matching funds from the province provides the Government of Alberta with the use of 25 telecommunications towers at no additional operating costs for 20 years and may be used by the new Alberta first responder radio system. The province's funding commitment also ensures that Internet Service Providers in Alberta will have access to the towers at competitive market-based rates.

"Increasing access to broadband Internet is an ambitious goal, but it has far-reaching and long-term benefits for all Albertans, especially in rural and remote areas of the province. It will help us in terms of improving social and economic opportunities for individuals and industry, improving access to government services, and connecting all Albertans to the global community," said Ray Prins, Rural Caucus chair and MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka.

The Government of Alberta is working to increase access to broadband Internet service across the province. Currently, the province along with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association are assessing remaining gaps in service. When the assessment is complete, additional programs or initiatives will be introduced.

"The Alberta government recognizes that access to broadband services is critical to the sustainability and future development of our rural communities," said Service Alberta Minister Heather Klimchuk. "We are fully committed to ensuring Albertans have access to high-speed Internet wherever they live. We are pleased with the support we have received from our federal colleagues that helps brings us closer to our goal."

The Alberta government is working to build a better Alberta by fostering economic growth, strengthening our health and education systems, investing in infrastructure, supporting safe

and strong communities and ensuring a clean and healthy environment.

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