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## Process To Qualify Begins for Rural Internet Providers

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Develop Nova Scotia has launched the first phase of the process to find qualified service providers to enhance and extend reliable, high-speed internet across the province in rural areas.

As part of the Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative, the Crown corporation is inviting organizations interested in building, managing, and maintaining high-speed internet networks to become pre-qualified to bid on network solutions.

**“This is an important next step in delivering improved internet service for rural Nova Scotia,” said Geoff MacLellan, Minister of Business. “This is an investment in strategic economic infrastructure that is critical to building stronger communities and a stronger economy.”**

Earlier this year the government placed \$193 million in an internet funding trust to help connect more communities, homes and businesses across the province. That funding commitment was one of the largest investments per capita by any province.

Potential providers that can demonstrate they have the financial capacity, human resources and experience to build, maintain, grow and evolve the networks will be invited to bid on implementing internet in specified zones.

Projects must meet or exceed provincial speed targets of 50 megabits per second for wired connections and 25 megabits per second for wireless and must evolve with changing technology.

Develop Nova Scotia estimates the pre-qualification stage will be complete by the end of March with the invitation to bid released in the summer. Project starts will depend on market response, but it is estimated they could begin in early 2020.

All federal Connect to Innovate projects that identified provincial contributions have been invited to complete a simplified application process so that funds may flow and projects can begin as early as possible next year.

“We know that reliable high-speed internet is critical to creating places that attract people and investment to Nova Scotia,” said Jennifer Angel, president and CEO of Develop Nova Scotia. “Our job is to deliver a reliable high-speed internet solution to as many Nova Scotians as possible, as soon as possible. “It’s a complex challenge, but we are working with an excellent team and stakeholders across the province. We are determined to get it right.”

While touring the province this year, Develop Nova Scotia heard helpful feedback from key stakeholders, including concerns that some communities may be overlooked, companies would not provide consistently reliable service and services should be affordable.

With these concerns in mind, the forward-looking implementation strategy was developed and ensures:

- with Develop Nova Scotia’s provincewide lens, no region will be left behind in planning and service will reach as many Nova Scotians as possible, greater than 95 per cent
- through service level agreements and ongoing monitoring, Develop Nova Scotia will hold providers accountable to deliver reliable high-quality service over time
- Develop Nova Scotia’s goal is to ensure services are competitively priced so they are affordable for Nova Scotians.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust, Develop Nova Scotia is leading the implementation strategy to improve high-speed Internet service in underserved areas through the Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative. The Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust has final decision-making authority on funding network solutions based on recommendations from Develop Nova Scotia.

For more information or to view the pre-qualification documents, visit the Develop Nova Scotia website at <http://www.developns.ca> .

## FOR BROADCAST USE:

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For more information visit the [Develop Nova Scotia website](#).

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