
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services

\$8.3M TO HELP FIRST NATIONS BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

VANCOUVER – The Province is providing another \$8.3 million in funding to help bridge the digital divide for British Columbia First Nations, announced Labour and Citizens' Services Minister Iain Black today. The funding will be used toward First Nations connectivity to open up social and economic opportunities for rural and remote First Nations communities.

“This is the latest in a series of steps we have taken to connect British Columbians with modern, high capacity broadband networks,” said Black. “This funding is focused on the needs of remote First Nations communities, and builds on the \$22.5 million announced in November to improve access to important services.”

The All Nations Trust Company (ANTCO) will administer the funds along with support from the First Nations Technology Council.

“Improved connectivity in all B.C. First Nations communities is a priority in our continuing efforts to close the social and economic gaps faced by First Nations,” said Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Leadership Council. “We are extremely pleased with today’s funding announcement and the resulting positive impact it will have on our communities. We look forward to continuing to work with all of those involved to bring high-speed connectivity and related capacity-building to all First Nations communities in B.C.”

Ninety-two per cent of British Columbians currently have access to broadband connectivity. Geography can make it challenging and expensive to bring broadband infrastructure to some locations. About 85 of the 203 First Nations in B.C. have broadband access. In addition to funding targeted specifically at First Nations connectivity, last year the Province announced a \$5.2-million, multi-year Connecting Citizens Grant Program to assist communities with the high costs of Internet connectivity to citizens and businesses in rural and remote areas of B.C.

“Connectivity is critical for First Nations in the advancement of education, health, economic development, housing and other services,” said Ruth Williams, CEO of ANTCO. “Receiving funding at this point of our planning cycle will assist in formulating our strategy to connect the greatest number of communities in the most efficient way.”

Black made the announcement today at the Information and Communications Technology Summit, an annual meeting that highlights partnerships and collaboration in the strategic use of connectivity for community development.

For more information:

NetworkBC at: <http://www.network.gov.bc.ca>

Pathways to Technology at: <http://www.pathwaystotechnology.ca>

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