



## Internet for Nova Scotia Update April 2020

We recognize these are difficult times for families and individuals. Now more than ever the importance of reliable high-speed Internet access is clear; as a support to the delivery of health and education, and for business continuity and competitiveness. We also know that keeping connected is an important part of community and that access is even more urgent in these unprecedented times.

### What's Happening Now

On March 20, with the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the Province identified up to \$15M in funding intended to support acceleration of Internet delivery. This was in addition to the \$45M originally committed to the first round of projects. These funds will come from the existing Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust. The use of the funds will be subject to the same due diligence and approval by the Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust and will only be invested if the solutions can be delivered materially more quickly – they are being evaluated on a case-by-case basis. This process is underway now and we hope to be in a position to share more details in the coming days.

We've had positive meetings with our project partners and have invited them to propose accelerated solutions. We are approaching this in two ways:

1. Working with service providers of already approved projects to identify ways to speed up delivery of Internet access, including additional funding to support accelerated project delivery, and removal of regulatory barriers.
2. Working with pre-qualified partners to identify additional interim solutions, that could facilitate the delivery of healthcare and education at a community level across the province.

### What We've Been Working On

We're focused on advancing existing projects as quickly as possible, including identifying interim solutions to bridge the gap, as we work to bring new projects online. We are making good progress, but we recognize there is a lot of work left to do and we are fully aware of the communities that remain underserved and unserved.

*"Access to customer connections have already occurred, including 500 homes and businesses in Shelburne, and we know more will be available as the providers continue their work in communities."*

On February 13, 2020, we launched a second round Request for Proposals (RFP) that includes all areas that remain underserved and unserved after RFP 1. Late in February, we held a Bidder's Conference to talk through the RFP with many of our 15 pre-qualified providers. The RFP is set to close in late May and announcements for those projects are anticipated to begin later this summer.

For all approved projects, design and engineering work is underway, preparation work has begun and projects are advancing. Some access to customer connections have already occurred, including 500 homes and businesses in Shelburne, and we know more will be available as the providers continue their work in communities.

We were planning multiple community drop-in events around the province to be able to talk to community about the process and answer their questions in person. Considering the direction from the Province and Public Health to practice social distancing and limit social gatherings to help curb the spread of COVID-19, we have put those plans on hold until further notice. We will reschedule them as soon as it is safe to do so and look forward to meeting with you.

We appreciate your patience, especially during this difficult time, as we work to provide access to connections to more Nova Scotians as quickly as possible.

### Questions and Answers

**Q. With many people working from home, the March 30 announcement of schools remaining closed until at least May 1 as well as school lessons transferring to online and through mailed at-home learning packages, what are you doing to help speed up Internet access throughout the province?**

We understand the importance of reliable high-speed Internet access, especially as a support to the delivery of health care and education. We can assure you that this is a top priority to us and we're working diligently to move existing projects forward by inviting project partner ingenuity, advancing the next round of improved projects, and identifying opportunities to providing interim community-based access to high-speed Internet. We hope to be in a position to share more in this regard very shortly.

**Q. A project was announced in my general area in February. How do I know if my home or business will be affected?**

Now that contracts are signed, projects are underway. Service providers are working on additional engineering required to refine their plans down to specific street- and address-level detail. More information on those details will be available from the service provider, as plans are finalized and we'll ensure that detail is shared with you. As work proceeds, impacted Nova Scotians will be notified by service providers as to when and how their homes and businesses can be connected. We thank you for your patience during this time.

**Q. How do I know my house won't be left behind?**

The projects announced in February include approximately half of the unserved and underserved homes and businesses in Nova Scotia. We know where homes and businesses remain unserved and underserved across the province and all of these areas are included in the second RFP currently in market.

Our mandate is to cover more than 95% of Nova Scotia homes and businesses – and we're confident we can meet and exceed this goal, working to get as close to 100% as possible.