
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Citizens' Services

Project connects people of Lax Kw'alaams with high-speed internet

LAX KW'ALAAMS – People living in Lax Kw'alaams on the northwestern coast of B.C. will be able to unlock new possibilities with a \$1.1-million project to bring high-speed broadband internet access to more than 340 homes.

“High-speed internet is a game-changer for the people of Lax Kw'alaams, providing the essential tools for work, health care and community engagement,” said Jennifer Rice, North Coast MLA. “This strategic investment is about ensuring every individual in this community can thrive in the digital age.”

The project, to be built and operated by service provider CityWest, will provide faster broadband speeds for people living in the community and provide improved access to digital services, educational resources and economic opportunities. Construction will begin in 2024.

“Getting high-speed internet means a lot to our community because it means we can access services and programs online,” said Garry Reece, mayor of Lax Kw'alaams. “We appreciate all the partners that came together to make this connectivity project possible.”

The Province will invest as much as \$196,600 through the Connecting British Columbia program, administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust. The federal government will invest as much as \$523,000 through the federal Universal Broadband Fund. Service provider CityWest will contribute approximately \$423,000.

“Ensuring equitable access to high-speed internet services across the province, regardless of geographic location, is a commitment our government takes seriously,” said Lisa Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services. “This project in Lax Kw'alaams is a vital step in providing better access to economic opportunities and essential services, allowing residents to thrive in the communities they call home.”

The Province's investment is part of StrongerBC: Good Lives in Strong Communities, the Province's new vision outlining investments to help build a brighter future for rural communities and the people who call them home.

In March 2022, the governments of British Columbia and Canada announced a partnership to invest as much as \$830 million to support expansion of high-speed internet services to all households in B.C. by 2027. The Province has also made a specific commitment to connect every First Nations community to high-speed internet services by 2027, which is part of the government's Declaration Act Action Plan. The Connecting British Columbia and Connecting Communities BC programs provide funding for projects to expand high-speed internet service access to rural and remote areas of the province. The plan to connect all households will level the playing field for British Columbians, ensuring better access to services and economic

opportunities for every community.

Quotes:

Guidie Hutchings, federal Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency –

“Access to reliable high-speed internet is a necessity, no matter where you live in Canada. That’s exactly why your government will connect 98% of Canadians to high-speed Internet by 2026. Today, we are one step closer to that goal. Through our partnership with CityWest, more than 340 households in the remote, Indigenous community of Lax Kw’alaams and northwest B.C. will be brought online.”

Stefan Woloszyn, chief executive officer, CityWest –

“CityWest is deeply rooted in northern B.C., and we are proud to bring improved services to another northern community. We are honoured to partner with the Lax Kw’alaams Band to deliver fibre-optic services in their community together. This project is not just about providing internet, it’s about enriching lives, fostering inclusion, creating opportunities and driving positive change.”

Joel McKay, chief executive officer, Northern Development Initiative Trust –

"This announcement marks a significant moment as the people of Lax Kw’alaams embrace the digital age, thanks to the Province of B.C. and the Connecting BC program. High-speed broadband is more than wires and cables, it’s about connecting people to their dreams of a better future.”

Learn More:

To learn about Connectivity in B.C.,
visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/connectivity-in-bc>

To learn about Connecting Communities BC, visit:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/connectivity-in-bc/20601>

To read about StrongerBC: Good lives in Strong Communities, visit:
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Good-Lives-Strong-Communities-2023.pdf>

To learn about StrongerBC: BC's Economic Plan, visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/economic-plan>

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