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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Technology, Innovation and Citizens' Services

### **Improved high-speed Internet coming to parts of rural Okanagan**

KELOWNA – Rural Okanagan residents and businesses will be better able to access faster Internet speeds, thanks to the B.C. government's \$185,000 investment for a new connectivity project being jointly funded by ispeed Communications.

With this investment, the Province will be funding half of the \$370,000 project through the Connecting British Columbia program, administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust.

Approximately 3,100 rural households and businesses will have better opportunities to learn, do business, access services and stay connected through ispeed's technology upgrades and network coverage expansion. ispeed's project complements other Internet improvements being made by other Internet service providers operating in the region.

Communities and locales benefitting from this investment include Mara, Grindrod, Enderby, Trinity Valley, Armstrong, Parker Cove, Vernon, Coldstream, Lake Country, rural Kelowna, Ellison, rural West Kelowna, rural Peachland and Westside Road between Kelowna and Vernon.

Connecting British Columbia is a \$10-million grant program funded by the B.C. government to expand and upgrade broadband connections in rural and remote communities throughout the province. Since 2005, ispeed Communications has served the Central to Northern Okanagan with Internet access services.

As part of the #BCTECH Strategy, the provincial government recognizes the importance of improving high-speed Internet access provincewide. The Province is working with other levels of government and the private sector to make this happen.

The #BCTECH Strategy is a key component of the BC Jobs Plan to support the growth of B.C.'s vibrant technology sector and strengthen British Columbia's diverse innovation economy. The multi-year strategy includes a \$100-million BC Tech Fund and initiatives to increase talent development and market access for tech companies that will drive innovation and productivity throughout the province.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Premier Christy Clark, MLA for Westside-Kelowna –**

“Rural and remote communities need access to the world's most powerful tool to connect, learn, find information and compete in the global economy. High-speed Internet service should be available to everyone in the province, that's why we're investing in connectivity infrastructure through our #BCTECH Strategy.”

**Norm Letnick, MLA for Kelowna-Lake Country –**

“ispeed Communications has a passion for connecting small rural businesses and connecting local farmers in our region. Our government is helping ispeed pursue its goal through this funding, providing upgrades for and connecting roughly 3,100 rural households.”

**Steve Thomson, MLA for Kelowna-Mission –**

“We’re proud to support local Internet service providers like ispeed Communications through the Connecting British Columbia program. By jointly funding this project, we’re helping them better serve their existing customers and enabling them to reach new ones.”

**Eric Foster, MLA for Vernon-Monashee –**

“This \$185,000 investment will make Internet access a reality for the first time in some rural Okanagan communities and improve existing connections for others. By supporting local Internet service provider ispeed Communications, our government is improving the lives of local residents.”

**Joel McKay, CEO, Northern Development Initiative Trust –**

“Northern Development is proud to help bring improved connectivity to rural and remote communities around our province. The investment in these infrastructure upgrades helps these small communities access services, enhance lifestyle and conduct their business in an efficient manner.”

**Dave Bradich, president, ispeed Communications –**

“This funding will allow us to improve services for our existing customers and connect additional rural households and businesses throughout the Okanagan. In an effort to best serve our community, we offer unlimited monthly Internet usage without any data caps.”

**Quick Facts:**

- Under the Connecting British Columbia program, nearly \$10 million has been allocated to more than 25 projects that will improve or expand Internet services in over 200 communities around the province.
- To date, more than 40,000 households have benefited through the Connecting British Columbia program.

**Learn More:**

Connecting British Columbia program: <http://www.northerndevlopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/business-development/connecting-british-columbia>

ispeed Communications: <http://ispeed.net>

Northern Development Initiative Trust: <http://www.northerndevlopment.bc.ca>

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