Media Backgrounder

Saskatchewan! Connected

www.saskatchewan.ca/connected

- **$1.3M** in capital costs (2006/07 fiscal year)
- **$339K** in on-going costs beginning in the 2007/08 fiscal year
- Provides Wi-Fi coverage to Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon downtown and other select business areas, and post-secondary campuses
- Supports objectives of retention of youth, attraction of business
- Promotes Saskatchewan cities as being technologically-savvy business-friendly places to live, work and go to school
- The largest free Wi Fi network in Canada
- Provisions will be made to block access to inappropriate material

The 'blanketed' Wi-Fi areas of each city include:

City	Wireless Coverage Districts
Regina	Downtown, Cathedral district, Dewdney Avenue restaurant district, University of Regina, SIAST
Saskatoon	Downtown, Broadway-Nutana, University of Saskatchewan, SIAST
Prince Albert	Downtown, SIAST
Moose Jaw	Downtown, SIAST

Q: What is Wi-Fi?

Wi-Fi is a brand originally licensed by the Wi-Fi Alliance® to describe the technology used to wirelessly network mobile computing devices – for example laptop computers, and is now widely used for Internet access, gaming, and linking together a variety of electronics devices.

If you have a wireless network at home connecting your computer or your game console to the Internet you are already using Wi-Fi.

Q: How will this be done?

Small wireless units about the size of a coffee-can will be mounted on light standards and telephone poles throughout the coverage zones. These units will provide wireless connectivity throughout a certain range and will communicate back to the Internet via a central antenna mounted on a building within the zone.

Q: What other Canadian cities have free Wi-Fi in place?

Fredericton has had a free municipally-sponsored Wi-Fi network in place since 2003.

Toronto's new downtown Wi-Fi has been provided for free since early 2006; however the city has announced they plan to begin charging for the service starting in March.

There are also hundreds of free municipal Wi-Fi rollouts in place, or in the planning stages, across the United States today.

Q: Who would operate and maintain the networks?

The Information Technology Office (ITO) will operate and maintain the networks, in conjunction with SaskTel, the cities and post-secondary institutions.

Q: What will be the role of SaskTel in the initiative?

The ITO is working closely with SaskTel to develop a rollout plan for each of the four cities. SaskTel will likely provide certain components and services of the network including much of the infrastructure and the pipes that connect the wireless zones to the Internet.

Q: What will be the impact on other local telecommunications companies?

The network will offer speeds that are somewhat less than high-speed Internet, but are nonetheless significantly better than dial-up, making the service most suitable for occasional or light use by residents, students, and visitors to our cities. Residents seeking higher speeds are encouraged to purchase high-speed Internet access from any of the local Internet service providers.

Q: Are there any other restrictions to the free access?

As a publicly-funded initiative we have decided to block adult, gambling, hate, and racism sites from access. Again, residents seeking unfettered access to the Internet are encouraged to purchase high-speed Internet from any of the local Internet service providers.

Q: How will the service work?

Simply open up a Wi-Fi equipped laptop or desktop computer in the coverage zone, register for a free account and logon and start using the free service.

Q: Why just these cities? Why not others as well?

This is just a starting point. The province has a long history of technology "firsts": the first ATM network, the first provincial fibre optic network, and CommunityNet - the first public sector network connecting every school, hospital, and government office. Without a doubt this initiative as well will expand over time to include larger parts of these cities and to include more communities.

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