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Final Chance to Apply for High Speed Internet Service

County of Grande Prairie residents have only one month left to apply for access to wireless high speed internet service in the hard-to-service areas. The deadline to apply is December 31, 2009.

Earlier this spring the County received up to \$300,000 in grant funding from Agriculture and Rural Development for the second phase of the project. Under funding guidelines, the County contributes 25% of the costs for the project. The County has installed approximately 100 towers in the hard-to-reach areas with another 100 applicants awaiting installation. GPN Wireless Networks Solutions Ltd., a local internet service provider, is responsible for surveying and installing receivers that pick up the signal from existing distribution towers.

“We urge anyone having difficulty obtaining service to contact GPN before the deadline,” stated Deputy Reeve Richard Harpe, who is Chairman of the High Speed Rural Internet committee. “This project will ensure students, families, businesspeople, and workers will have the same opportunities regardless of where they live and work.”

This initiative is already having a positive impact on the residents and businesses in the County. Caroline Thibeault was frustrated with the slow dial-up service at her home west of Bezanson, especially while home-schooling her children. “The trees surrounding our house made it impossible to receive high speed internet service until the County installed a local tower for us,” stated Thibeault. “Now, we no longer have to drive to the library, all of the information is just a click away. The best part of the service is that we can log onto social networking sites and view pictures of grandkids that live far away. It just took too long with dial-up.”

Please call GPN at 780-882-6623 for any updates on your application. Remember, the County has sponsored the local towers, you are still responsible for the installation fee and monthly rates for internet service as provided by GPN.

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Background Information

In late 2007, the County of Grande Prairie put out a request for proposals to local wireless Internet service providers and selected GPN Wireless Network Solutions Ltd. to partner with the County in this project. An agreement to construct towers and provide receivers in the County was reached in December 2007 and the project started in March 2008. The County invested \$260,000 into the project that would see up to 26 towers constructed in rural areas where there were no other existing service providers.

The County has ownership for 10 Internet towers located at Bear Hill Park, the Mountview Curling Club site in Elmworth, the Town of Beaverlodge, the Teepee Creek Fire Station, Clairmont, Goodfare, Richmond Hill, the South Protective Services Building, and at two sites in the Demmitt area. Following the completion of these towers, the County initiated a program in late 2008 to go after areas not covered by the towers due to unique geographical barriers. The only pre-requisite before applying for County assistance is to check with existing Internet service providers to see if they may be already operating in the area. A list of providers with contact information is posted on the County website under [High Speed Internet](#). Further background information can be found on same [web page](#).

