

WORKING FOR TAXPAYERS

Municipalities partnering with business to deliver high-speed Internet.

JohnQ Public Inc. (JohnQ) has partnered with RFNOW Inc. on the first phase of building a regional high-speed Internet infrastructure network in the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region. The business case, developed for the entire region, has identified six First Go communities: RM of Portage la Prairie, Headingley, Macdonald, Ritchot, Stonewall, and Rockwood. Connections to these communities are expected to start this fall. This phase is critical in building out the full network in a financially affordable and sustainable way. The full build out to all communities is expected to be completed about two years from now.

Delivering value across our municipalities.

Metro Region municipalities need fast, affordable, and equitable Internet service with competitive pricing for all. JohnQ and RFNOW will provide superior unlimited service, 100 Mbps down and 100 Mbps up, that is equal to or better than the levels of service that urban centres across Canada enjoy.

Pricing must be fair, and it must ensure the sustainability of the network. Pricing starts at \$139.99 per month and hook-up fees start at \$699.99 but may vary depending on the location of your home or business and the number of hook-ups that can be generated in an area.

Owned by municipalities.

JohnQ was formed in 2018 by 12 of the 18 member municipalities of the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region (WMR). This Municipal Participation Corporation provides a platform for private/public partnerships and allows for collective regional action in support of funding opportunities, projects, and investments that will strengthen the Metro Region and the Province of Manitoba. The 12 founding municipalities are shareholders in the corporation that operates under a separate Board of Directors, acting in the best interest of the region as a whole.

A regional mandate.

Together, the 18 member municipalities in the WMR are capitalizing on collective strengths and increasing the competitiveness of the region and the Province of Manitoba. Access to high-speed Internet infrastructure is critical to the economic competitiveness of the region. Through the WMR, member municipalities are coordinating economic development plans and developing the first Regional Growth Management and Servicing Plan for the Metro Region (Plan 2050). JohnQ provides a platform for collaboration and private/public partnerships that allow the municipalities to undertake important infrastructure projects like Connecting to Opportunity.

JohnQ Public Inc. is the vehicle through which WMR municipalities are partnering with industry to deliver high-speed Internet to our communities.

A new partnership model.

Up until now, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in our region have used their own resources and requested contributions from municipalities and other levels of government for infrastructure that they would ultimately own and operate. As a partner, JohnQ municipalities hold an ownership stake, providing an opportunity to realize profit, pay back start-up loans, and connect more communities, including the harder-to-reach places.

We recognize that we must partner with an experienced ISP to ensure that we can deliver on our mandate to facilitate high-speed Internet services across the region. RFNOW Inc. is a Manitoba company that has the infrastructure, capacity, and expertise to undertake this project. RFNOW Inc. has a proven model for delivering fibre to rural residents, businesses, and farms.

In this model, JohnQ and RFNOW have a partnership agreement and are both owners of the network. This joint ownership gives JohnQ a seat at the table when important decisions are being made. There will also be opportunities for other ISPs to participate as we build out the phases of the project.

Together, but not alone.

We will be meeting with and seeking support from other levels of government, private partners, and lending institutions as the project continues to unfold. Right now, we have submitted applications for funding support to the federal and provincial government, the Canadian Radio- television Telecommunication Commission (CRTC), as well as institutions that support this type of work. Leaders at JohnQ will continue to develop partnerships with business and industry, other communities, and levels of government. We know we are stronger together and believe we owe our children the opportunity to be successful here.

Our sense of urgency.

High-speed Internet service is one of the most important issues being raised by communities outside of Winnipeg. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted just how vulnerable residents outside of the city are as they attempted to work, participate in school, and stay connected via existing infrastructure. For our region to remain competitive, we must provide access that delivers fast and affordable service regardless of the density or size of the community. High-speed Internet infrastructure is critical for farms, businesses, schools, and residents in the growing region.

The CRTC has set new basic service targets for all Canadians at speeds of 50Mbps down and 10Mbps up. Most communities do not have access to this. **This access is not a privilege, but a necessity.**

Building out this infrastructure will take time. We have done a great deal of work in research, planning, negotiations, and due diligence to get to this stage. We will continue to work diligently to connect all communities as fast as our physical and financial capacity will allow.

There's always more.

More information about JohnQ.

More information about the Winnipeg Metropolitan Region.

More information about RFNOW.

Contact us:

Chris Kennedy

COO, RFNOW Inc.

204-748-4842

Chriskennedy@rfnw.com