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## South Saskatchewan Ready in Partnership with PrairiesCan and SaskTel Announce Plans for the Installation of a New Fibre Optics Network in the Region.

Coronach, Sask. – Today, South Saskatchewan Ready announced it has secured funding of \$1,954,000 from Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) for an important Fibre Optics initiative in the 4 rural towns within the regional partnership, Coronach, Rockglen, Bengough and Willow Bunch. This builds on the investment to increase bandwidth in partnership with Rural Municipalities. The South Saskatchewan Ready (SSR) organization has partnered with SaskTel to deploy SaskTel *infiNET™* service, providing up to a gigabit Internet speeds and a more future proof broadband network.

At present, there is insufficient rural internet service in the south-central region of Saskatchewan to support the transition to a post-coal economy when the mandated closure of the Poplar River Power Station occurs in 2030. The investment required to regenerate the regional economy without access to better services, comparable to other cities and towns, new businesses in rural regions will not be able to achieve the levels of competitiveness needed to succeed, thus, the likelihood of increased economic development for major initiatives will be very low.

Online business, social connection and education and training have been advanced significantly since the beginning of the pandemic. Health and safety, economic lockdowns, and citizens without elevated services are falling behind economically. The provision of sufficient communications network access will provide the region with a much-needed economic boost and a gateway to future development opportunities.

“Coal Transition has many economic challenges, especially in rural regions where economies are largely undiversified. Fibre Optics will provide our regional population centres with opportunities to compete with larger centres for economic opportunities.” said Sharon Adam, Chair, South Saskatchewan Ready.

“As Saskatchewan’s communications leader, we understand how important broadband connectivity has become in the modern world, and we’re pleased to partner with South Saskatchewan Ready to bring SaskTel *infiNET* service to Bengough, Coronach, Rockglen, and Willow Bunch.” Said Doug Burnett, SaskTel President and CEO.



“Our government takes this seriously and is pleased to support the work that South Saskatchewan Ready is doing to ensure that critical fibre optic service is improved for these rural communities,” said Dan Vandal, Minister for PrairiesCan. “We know that the low carbon transition is accelerating, but we also know that there are economic opportunities emerging as we prepare for this shift.”

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