



PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE SCHOOL DIVISION

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PRESS RELEASE

PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE SCHOOL DIVISION WIDE-AREA NETWORK EXPANSION – PHASE III

Portage la Prairie School Division bringing high-speed Internet to Oakville School

Portage la Prairie School Division - In an effort to ensure that students and staff of the PLPSD have access to reliable high-speed Internet connection, the Portage la Prairie School Division is expanding its wide-area network to include the community of Oakville, MB.

For the past 8 years, the PLPSD been planning, building and maintaining a local high-speed, fibre-optic network that connects all schools in the city of Portage la Prairie. The first phase began in 2012 with the installation of a fibre-optic network in the city of Portage la Prairie, which connected all schools, the Operations Depot and the PLPSD Division Office. In 2018, Phase II of the wide-area network expansion was completed, which eliminated the need for radio towers, as a fibre-optic link (15km) was buried to connect the city network. The Phase II link connected the local network in the city to a Manitoba Hydro tower located southeast of Portage la Prairie. Phase II, instantly increased the connectivity speeds from 200mbps to 900-1000mbps (upload and download speeds) significantly improving access and reliability.

Currently, the PLPSD is working on Phase III of the wide-area network expansion, which will expand the network to include the town of Oakville, located 24km east of Portage la Prairie. The network will connect the Oakville School, which currently receives its Internet signal via a radio tower located atop the school. Unfortunately, weather conditions, radio interference and the distance from Portage, have meant that the school’s connectivity has been frequently unreliable. The Oakville School, which currently receives data at speeds of 40-50mbps, will see that connection jump to an astounding 1000mbps (upload and download) once the network is completed in December of 2018. With connectivity speeds in this range, students and teachers will be able to maximize the use of portable devices vital for teaching, research and communication within a modern curriculum.

Phase III of the project will see the fibre-optic cable buried at a depth of 1.5m running along Provincial Roads #240 and #331 within the limits of the RM of Portage la Prairie. The route will extend from the school division’s access point on PR 240 to Oakville School, a distance of approximately 24KM. The fibre will run directly into Oakville School.

The Chairperson of the Portage la Prairie School Division, Hélèn Hoggarth, expressed the division’s commitment to funding technology upgrades in local schools, noting that the school division has not only provided the state-of-the-art infrastructure through its fibre network, but also the necessary hardware within the schools, citing significant investments made by the PLPSD to equip all schools with the latest computer technology.

Hoggarth notes that the division will be investing approximately \$400,000 dollars into the latest network expansion and feels that the public should be aware that the PLPSD's wide area network projects have been financed locally, without provincial support.

Oakville resident and school trustee Murray McLenehan, is pleased to see this project moving forward and notes that this investment will ultimately support learning and the students at Oakville School for many years to come.

The Portage la Prairie School Division released a request for proposals in July 2018 and selected Fibre.ca as the successful bid. Fibre.ca is working with Crown Utilities to install the fibre-optic cable and connect the network to Oakville School. Both companies have been involved in all previous phases of the division's fibre-optic expansion projects.

Completion of the project is expected in late December, early January 2019.