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## NEWS RELEASE

### NEW PARTNERSHIP CLOSER TO OFFERING HIGH SPEED & FIBRE OPTIC INTERNET TO GROWING WINNIPEG METRO REGION

WINNIPEG - December 13, 2018 - Mayors and Reeves from METRO municipalities surrounding Winnipeg moved another step closer to offering high-speed and fibre optic Internet service today, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with two industry-leading strategic partners.

"Most municipalities surrounding Winnipeg don't have access to reliable, future-ready Internet and communications services," said Colleen Sklar, Executive Director of the Winnipeg METRO Region (WMR), an organization recently tasked by the Province to deliver economic development funding and programming throughout the Region. "There are many opportunities to connect communities to the digital economy and, once complete, this project will help the WMR make an even larger economic impact."

The MOU was signed today by JohnQ Public Inc., the WMR's economic development corporation, and two well established local and national Internet service providers – WireIE and RFNOW Inc. The regional fibre optic project – Connecting to Opportunity – is a prime example of how JohnQ works and what the WMR can accomplish through this new collaborative business model.

"Business owners, industry and residents all rank high-speed services as their top priority," said Reeve Brad Erb of Macdonald, Chair of the JohnQ Board. "Bringing the right partners to the table is the critical next step to building a cost-effective, sustainable and competitive broadband network that will allow the Region to attract good companies and good jobs while also servicing the needs of residents."

Next steps in the process between the strategic partners include:

- Finalizing the business model;
- Completing the design of the network;
- Negotiating with other stakeholders;
- Developing and recommending the final broadband service offerings for end users; and,
- Developing and recommending an open access model for 3rd party ISPs to promote competition.

"WireIE is excited to help design and implement a carrier-grade broadband network," said Rob Barlow, President & CEO. "WireIE overcomes constraints around geography, time and budget, to break through barriers that traditional legacy networks can't address. We will meet and exceed latency, bandwidth and service assurance requirements with our partners."

Based in Virden, Manitoba, RFNOW Inc. has a depth of knowledge and experience working with under-served communities like those in the WMR. "Given our large infrastructure, network and training program, we are confident in our ability to help the Winnipeg METRO Region hit the ground running," said Chris Kennedy, COO of RFNOW.

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Through JohnQ, the development of high-speed Internet infrastructure is being explored for 43 under-served communities in the 13 member municipalities in the METRO region surrounding Winnipeg. Many are shovel ready which means construction could commence as early as mid-May 2019.

Ray Bouchard, President & CEO of Enns Brothers Ltd. and Chair of Enterprise Machine Intelligence & Learning Initiative (EMILI) offers his congratulations to the Winnipeg METRO Region. "This is an important step in advancing more productive and sustainable agriculture in the region," he said. "Farm operations, businesses and residents need consistent access to high-speed Internet to implement the kinds of intelligent technologies that will inform and accelerate the agriculture sector and the Manitoba economy."

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For more information, see backgrounder attached.

Related Links: [johnq.ca](http://johnq.ca) [wireie.com](http://wireie.com) [rfnow.com](http://rfnow.com)

Media Contacts:

Rob Barlow, President & CEO – WireIE (Development) Inc.  
Telephone: 1.905.882.4660 E-mail: [rob.barlow@wireie.com](mailto:rob.barlow@wireie.com)

Colleen Sklar – JohnQ Public Inc.  
Telephone: 1.204.781.7346 Email: [colleen@wmregion.ca](mailto:colleen@wmregion.ca)

Chris Kennedy, Chief Operating Officer – RFNOW Inc.  
Telephone 1.204.748.4842 E-mail: [chriskennedy@rfnow.com](mailto:chriskennedy@rfnow.com)