

# From dream to reality

## - bringing high-speed Internet to rural Manitoba

Submitted by I-NetLink Wireless

It began with a dream when **Charlie Clark**, President and CEO of I-NetLink Wireless, saw the desperate need for high-speed Internet in rural Manitoba. In the fall of 2001, I-NetLink began with one experimental tower. When asked if Clark would have envisioned that I-NetLink would have such a strong presence in rural Manitoba he replied: "I underestimated the capability of this technology back in 2001. I recall thinking that we could perhaps reach out to Kemnay and Forrest, but certainly didn't anticipate that in five short years we would be covering over 100 communities." Through strong partnerships with Manitoba's rural municipalities, Clark and the I-NetLink team have been able to provide a valuable tool to rural Manitoba; the Internet.

High-speed Internet has become a necessity in the lives of Manitobans. Not only has it enriched economic and community development, but it also offers rural communities the same opportunities as urban areas. Broadband not only extends local employment opportunities, access to healthcare and makes communication easier; but also creates advancements in education and agriculture. "In the last five years, I have watched the borders come down and have seen communities grow and prosper and never realized what talent we have hidden in our rural communities. I am very proud and honoured to be part of this growth and to be a fellow Manitoban," said **Tami Clements**, Vice-President of I-NetLink Wireless.

How does wireless broadband technology work? The network operates through radio frequencies from towers that communicate through line of site. These towers are networked and receive a signal from a fiber connection in Brandon. Each tower extends from 100'-150' covering up to a 15 km radius.

What does the future hold for wireless broadband in rural Manitoba? When asked this question, **Mike Clark**, (Research and Development), replied that wireless broadband offers "new opportunities for the rural municipalities to be on the leading edge of technology. There is so much that can now be accomplished that even a few years ago was simply impossible or not feasible such as VOIP (voice over IP), remote backups, video monitoring, security/automations systems and, and Emergency/Event Notification (EEN) and the list goes on." Through our continued partnership with InfoMetrics incor-



Charlie Clark, I-Netlink's President and CEO with VP Tami-Rae Clements.

porated, I-NetLink will ensure that these types of technologies become a reality.

What do these technologies mean for rural Manitoba? VOIP is the transmission of voice traffic over Internet protocol networks. Implementing a VOIP system over a wireless network can have huge cost savings and increase the features of a present phone system. **Tom Mollard**, CAO of the Town and RM of Hamiota commented about their recent implementation of a VOIP system, "it has provided us the dependability in addition to significantly lowered costs. The system reduced operating costs by 50%." Remote backups are an online system for backing up and storing computer files. Remote video monitoring can be used for a wide variety of applications; everything from monitoring pig barns to gas pumps from any computer connected to a high-speed Internet connection.

IP enabled security/automation systems can be adapted to secure just about anything. "Imagine calling your cabin to turn up the heat; or getting an email while you are working, saying that your hot water tank has started to leak. This technology really takes security to a whole new level," said Mike Clark.

With an EEN system, you can setup automatic event notification for everything from fire and rescue to road closures. For example, in the event of a fire, the EEN system would call everyone on the volunteer fire department. If the system could not reach the individuals by phone it will try to email and text message. As soon as crew members respond, the site is updated to include who has been

I-NetLink is committed to giving back to the rural communities. Revenue sharing programs have been established with municipalities who were involved in the BRAND (Broadband for Rural and Northern Development) project and those who are a part of the Parkland Telecommunications Network (PTN). The company further supports the community through educational scholarships and athletic grants in addition to recruiting local resellers and installers.

notified and when they should arrive. The future of municipal technology is endless. Mike Clark comments, "These are just a few examples of how new technologies built on the wireless infrastructure can really make a difference in these [rural Manitoban] communities."

With time, technology changes and improves. Clark supports this fact by adding, "I-NetLink is dedicated to the wireless world. We will continue to expand our knowledge base and share the benefits of this technology to our clients." One major technological advance is the creation of the WIMAX standard. Clark quotes that "WIMAX is an industry standard, meaning that the major manufacturers of the product will all be producing products that will interoperate. I-NetLink is partnered with the leaders of this technology and is already deploying WIMAX radio links for selected clients."

Through the Industry Canada BRAND program, I-NetLink grew as they brought wireless broadband to over 40 communities. The company currently continues its expansion with the Parkland Telecommunications Network (PTN) project, where services will be provided to 33 Parkland communities. This project received a \$4 million investment from the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund (see story on p. 14) and includes 16 RMs, a town, a village and eight Aboriginal & Northern Affairs communities. The project completion deadline is March 2007, but I-NetLink will be providing service in the fall of 2006.

Five short years ago, Charlie Clark never envisioned his dream becoming as real as it is today. When asked his opinion on how wireless broadband has impacted rural Manitoba his answer came quickly. Clark said "I am particularly proud of this [wireless] achievement as we are constantly being thanked by our clients for making their lives simpler and more productive. It is especially rewarding to know that we have played a small part in keeping rural Manitoba vibrant".

For more information, please visit [www.inetlink.ca](http://www.inetlink.ca).



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