

Statement of Principles: First Mile Connectivity Consortium (FMCC)

Preamble

The First Mile Connectivity Consortium (FMCC) is a national association of non-profit telecom organizations and associate members dedicated to the advancement of high-quality telecommunications and digital applications, content and services in Indigenous, remote, rural and Northern communities in Canada. We work with underserved communities, their citizens and consumers who lack access to digital communication infrastructures and services. FMCC focuses on advocacy, research and capacity-building activities to support communities to achieve their self-determined goals. Above all, we are a collective voice that respects each member's right to speak widely and freely on its own behalf.

First Mile is a direct challenge to the corporate telecom industry's "last mile" narrative that places their corporate interests, developments, investments and profits before the needs of communities. First Mile addresses the needs of local communities, the home of the first mile. As telecommunications infrastructure and services rapidly develop in small remote and rural communities, the relationships, structures and agreements put into place are shaping how these systems are created and managed for the future. First Mile prioritizes community-led solutions that create local economic and social opportunities, determine local ownership and control of infrastructure and networks, support digital literacies and minimize digital divides. First Mile aims to facilitate spaces where communities gain substantive voice in the formation of the telecommunications policy and regulations that shape these developments.

First Mile supports the objectives in the *Telecommunications Act* that outline a national system to: "safeguard, enrich, and strengthen the social and economic fabric of Canada and its regions"; "render reliable and affordable telecommunications services of high quality accessible to Canadians in both urban and rural areas in all regions of Canada"; "enhance the efficiency and competitiveness...of Canadian telecommunications"; and "respond to the economic and social requirements of users of telecommunications services".

Principles

First Mile and its members are committed to these core principles:

- 1) **Advancing Appropriate Digital Infrastructure and Services.** More than ever, digital infrastructure is an essential public utility. If developed appropriately, particularly in rural, remote and isolated communities, it will enable key services such as health, education, economic development, governance, public security, communications and emergency services.
- 2) **Promoting Equitable, Affordable and Scalable Access.** Telecommunications are essential to the survival, well-being and sustainability of rural, remote and Northern communities. Residents of these communities have the right to accessible, adequate, adaptable, affordable, reliable, redundant, secure and open access to telecommunications infrastructure and services.

- 3) **Recognizing that Communities and their Constituents Come First.** “First Mile” foregrounds the needs, aspirations, opportunities and challenges of communities and their constituents. Policy and regulation must balance adequate service with support for the economic and social requirements of communities. FMCC will facilitate partnerships between communities and public, private and civil society organizations. It will empower communities to make good decisions regarding the fair distribution of public subsidies for telecommunications development and the effective use of capital and operational funds.

- 4) **Facilitating and Supporting Communities where Consumers are Producers of Digital Content and Services.** FMCC represents non-profit community-based organizations that are owned and/or operated by a local entity; employ local residents as technicians and/or administrators; and provide local telecommunications services. Our success can be measured by social as well as economic outcomes in our communities; our goal is for local communities to own and control local infrastructure and services.

Membership in the First Mile Connectivity Consortium is conditional on acceptance of this Declaration of Principles and its Preamble.

Ratified on September 25, 2014.