

## Ericsson's Response to COVID-19 Crisis

### Vermont Telephone Company and Ericsson Mobilize Quickly to Provide Rutland City Public Schools with Free Internet

Vermont Telephone Company (VTel) and Ericsson aid students affected by school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic with access to free high-speed wireless Internet and Google Chromebooks.

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Students affected by school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic now have access to free high-speed wireless Internet and Google Chromebooks, thanks in part to collaborative efforts by Rutland City Public Schools, Vermont Telephone Company (VTel) and Ericsson.

"As we watched COVID-19 impact other countries, we began to develop a plan to support our students, just in case. We were uneasy because so many of our families are in poverty, with close to 70 percent of our students receiving free or reduced lunch. Equity of access would determine our success or failure if schools were to close, and we are committed to providing a world-class education to all of our students," said Patricia Aigner, Director of Technology, Rutland City Public Schools. "The biggest hurdle to successful online instruction is the lack of connectivity faced by families across the city. We are fortunate that Vermont Telephone and Ericsson stepped up to provide Internet to so many of our families, and our educational community is excited that we can connect more children to their teachers. This partnership is providing expanded access to our families to ensure students' continued education and overall welfare."

In less than ten days, VTel and its sister company VTel Wireless, in collaboration with Ericsson, mobilized quickly to deploy and install next-generation 4G/5G wireless radios and antennas on a building in downtown Rutland. These actions, combined with delivering wireless modems and routers to homes, allowed students to receive free Internet service immediately.

"One of our biggest challenges moving to online learning is making sure all our kids had Internet access at home. Many districts are facing this challenge, and we can't thank Vermont Telephone and Ericsson enough for helping bring Internet to families in Rutland. Through this partnership, we can continue to serve our kids and community," said Dan Roswell, Network Administrator, Rutland City Public Schools.

"Moving to remote learning requires students have access to the Internet, and we know the work Ericsson is doing is critical to many rural communities like Rutland," said Rob Johnson, Head of Customer Unit Regional Carriers for Ericsson North America. "We're proud to partner with the operator community to bring connectivity to rural America and connect the unconnected."

Dr. Michel Guité, founder of Vermont Telephone Company, said: “We’re all seeing the same grim news, leaving some to feel even hopelessness. But in Vermont we’re trying our best to be optimistic. As an essential business, our 15 trucks are visiting rural Vermont homes on a daily basis to solve problems. We’re delivering free wired and wireless Internet to kids without Internet wherever we can. In Rutland, we took it a step further by implementing an immediate upgrade, using our 5G spectrum, to ensure students of Rutland who may not have access to Internet could receive some of the fastest unlimited wireless Internet in America. We are deeply optimistic that American ingenuity and determination will help alleviate some of the burdens brought forth by this COVID-19 pandemic.”

Arianna Robinson, Chief Technology Officer for VTel and VTel Wireless, said: “We’ve been in a race against time to get fastest wireless Internet out there, to Rutland families in need, and we know we’ll find glitches, but we’re today recording wireless speeds to many Rutland homes well above 100 Mbps, in some cases over 300 Mbps, and with new 5G devices later this year we should be seeing speeds even higher.”

Rutland City Public Schools will be delivering Google Chromebooks to students during breakfast and lunch deliveries currently through school bus routes for efficiency and those lacking in transportation. Students’ Chromebooks will automatically connect to the Internet when it’s turned on.