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**TO NEWS EDITORS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PHASE 1 OF GOVNET FAR ADVANCED**

**Infrastructure works under the first phase of the government of Jamaica's GovNet project is far advanced** and several ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) have been connected to the network and critical projects are being supported. GovNet is a secure, wide area network infrastructure that will provide internet connectivity to MDAs to facilitate shared services.

Approval to undertake Phase 1 was granted in 2018 and it includes the buildout of a fibre optic network in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) and St. Catherine over a three year period. The initiative is being funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and spearheaded by eGov Jamaica Limited (eGovJa) along with the National Works Agency (NWA) and other partners.

Addressing participants at a recent GovTechTalk forum held at the offices of eGovJa in Kingston, Chief Executive Officer, Maurice Barnes, said GovNet represents much more than just connecting government and allowing more efficient and cost effective service delivery. "This is truly an exciting time for us to be part of such a massive undertaking by the government. GovNet is going to represent a significant part of the digital transformation of government, having one secure, high speed, wide area network connecting all of government, not just government offices and buildings, MDAs, but things like schools, hospitals, police stations, etc., to be able to bring data and additional services to the government and people of Jamaica.....Many social programmes can come out of this for further economic growth.", Mr. Barnes told the gathering.

The NWA, which has primary responsibility for the development of the road network, is one of the critical partners in the project. Operations Manager at the agency, Michael Saunderson, informed participants that all the fibre capacity to support government agencies in the KMA, Spanish Town and Portmore, which represents 80 percent of the target entities, is already built and the objective is to circle the entire island through a network of fibre optic cables. "The plan is to go to every parish council around the island and make it the aggregation point, even though it might not be the most ideal IT environment. We need to connect local government to central government. It will mean that

if the infrastructure is not up to grade, we will bring it up to grade.”, Mr. Saunderson said during his presentation.

Entities currently connected to GovNet infrastructure include the Attorney General’s Department, Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, eGovJa and its parent ministry – the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology, as well as the Ministry of National Security, while others are slated to be connected in the short term. The Central Treasury Management System (CTMS), Security Strengthening Programme (SSP), the Data Centre upgrades being facilitated through the National Identification System (NIDS), among others, are active projects which are now being supported by GovNet.

As it regards network and connectivity, Christopher McKenzie, Department Head of Network Services at eGovJa, revealed that, among other things, the services of a connectivity consultant and other technical specialists have been secured and staff has been trained in the use of MPLS technology which will undergird GovNet. Additionally, Mr. McKenzie said, “we have put in place a formal request procedure for entities who wish to be connected to GovNet and established a service request desk, so if anyone wants to raise an issue, make a request, report a fault, etc., there is a desk that goes through eGovJa in place right now. We are also in the process of designing an end to end process flow so that when an MDA requests connectivity, we have a process of logging from start to finish until the service is delivered.”

Proposed works under Phase 2 will cover the parishes of St. Ann, Trelawny and St. James. Phase 3 will cater to Hanover, Westmoreland, St. Elizabeth and Manchester, while Phase 4 will incorporate Portland, St. Thomas and eastern Kingston.

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