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Q&A: Northeast Superior Region Broadband Network

Canada's Rural & Remote Broadband Conference 2019   #CRRBC2019

Northeast Superior Regional Broadband Network

Thursday, November 14th, 2019

Bridging the Digital Divide Canada

Melanie Pilon, Network Lead

EDO The Township of Dubreuilville

The Northeast Superior Regional Broadband Network (commonly referred to as "The Network") has been formed with representatives from participating First Nations, Municipalities, and Economic Development Organizations in the region, including:
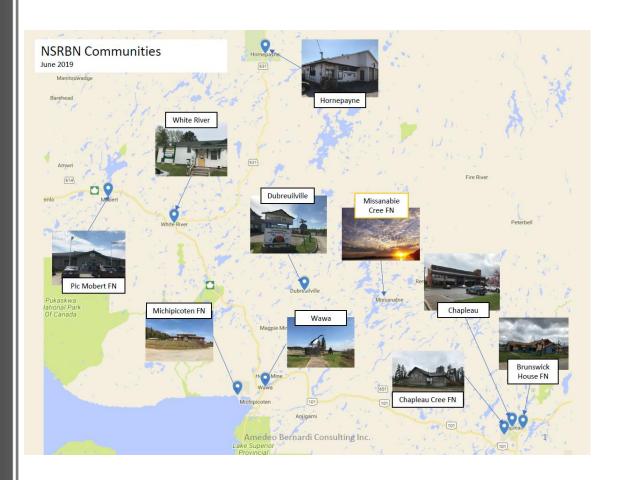
- *Brunswick House First Nation, Chapleau, Chapleau Cree First Nation, Dubreuilville, Hornepayne, Michipicoten First Nation, Missanabie First Nation, Pic Mobert First Nation, Wawa, White River, The Corporation du Développement Économique et Communautaire de Dubreuilville, The Economic Development Corporation of Wawa and the Superior East Community Futures Development Corporation.*

Special resources to the "The Network" include:

- *FedNor (Innovation, Science & Economic Development Canada (ISED)), ENDM, Northern Information Technology Geomatics Corporation (NITGC) and the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC).*

Introduction

Geographic Coverage Area

Source: Amedeo Bernardi Consulting Inc.

First Nations and Municipalities in the area face substantial barriers to building and expanding broadband infrastructure networks. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have little to no interest in extending services into these areas because there are significant up-front costs and marginal rates of return.

This situation has also created a near-monopoly in the market that triggers higher prices, fewer choices and less innovation.

Problem Statement

Mission

To build a broadband network in every community to improve economic growth, resiliency and improved access to health and education services.
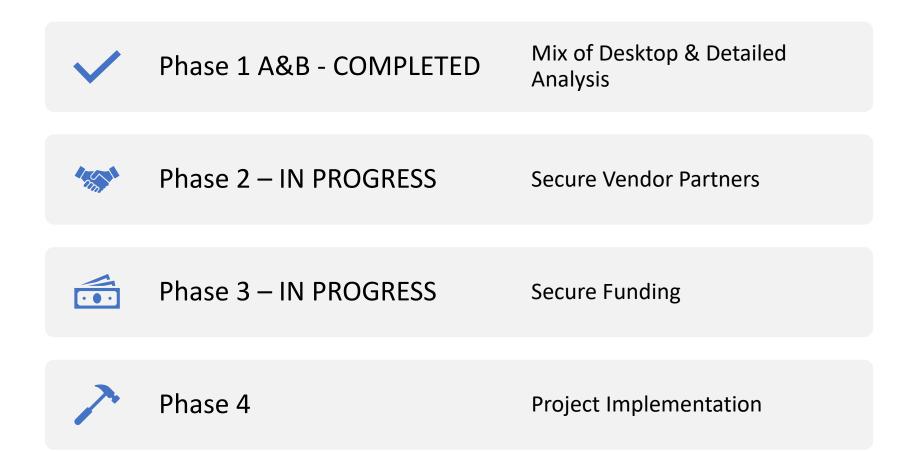
Vision

The Northeast Superior Region can be a resilient, inclusive and collaborative area that uses state-of-the-art broadband technology and data to better the economy and quality of life for all.

Mission & Vision Statement

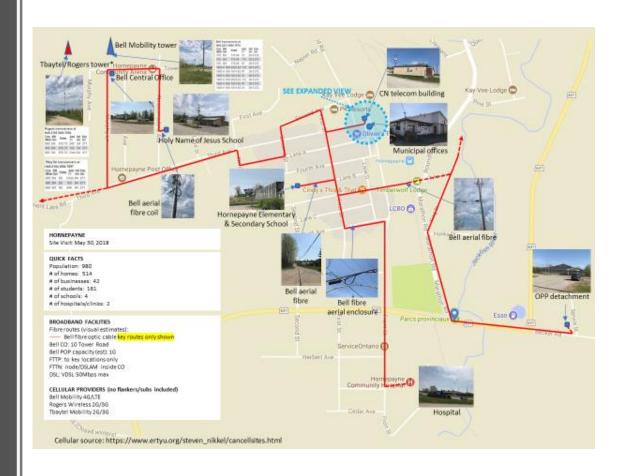| | Phase 1 A&B - COMPLETED | Mix of Desktop & Detailed Analysis |
	Phase 2 – IN PROGRESS	Secure Vendor Partners
	Phase 3 – IN PROGRESS	Secure Funding
	Phase 4	Project Implementation

Phased Approach

NSRBN – Phase 1 Overview

Regional Fibre

Ground Truthing

Local Broadband Infrastructure

Bell buried fibre warning marker

Expanded view of Bell's fibre access at the CN telecom building in Hornepayne

CN telecom building

Municipal offices

Bell fibre goes aerial throughout most of the town

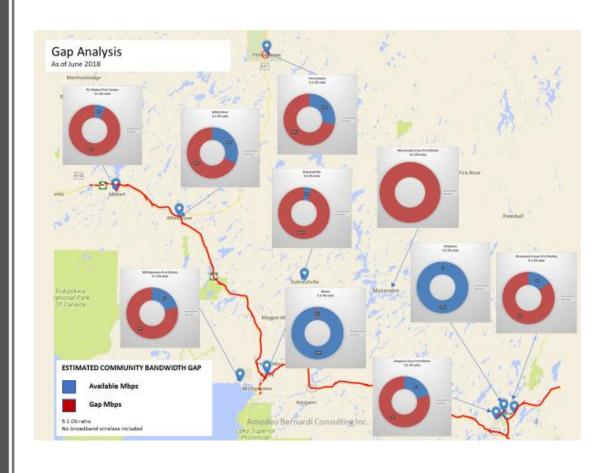Bell underground fibre optics vault next to CN telecom building

Road cut likely for the buried Bell fibre connection to the Municipal building

Bell underground fibre attached to utility pole

Community Broadband Gaps

Commission a feasibility study to assess the benefits of creating a regional ISP tailored to meet the needs of the participating communities and general area.

As a joint entity, the NSRBN should take the lead in the upcoming Federal "Closing the Broadband Gap" funding application and bring the service providers on board as partners as opposed to the service providers leading the applications.

Consider expanding the scope of future NSRBN phases to include cellular wireless.

Continue supporting the efforts of the Ontario Broadband Coalition in actively monitoring and contributing to Ontario Energy Board (OEB) pole attachment proceedings.

Secure the expertise of a Regulatory resource that can monitor and advise on current and upcoming proceedings that could have an impact on the region and the communities.

Appoint a resource to liaise directly with the regional service providers.

Undertake a review of the Smart Cities and Intelligent Communities movements.
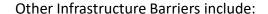
Summary Recommendations

In March 2018, The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) approved close to a 100% increase, bringing the pole attachment rate from $22.35/pole to $43.63/pole.
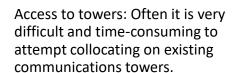
This is significant for all N. Ontario projects, for the following reasons:

Topography – We live on the Canadian Shield. The rock makes any business case to provide Broadband a challenge as buried fibre is rarely viable.

Making use of existing infrastructure, such as utility poles, is typically the first option.

However, the doubling in fees creates a large impact on operating costs for service providers to reach isolated communities or to deploy new fibre within communities.

Other Infrastructure Barriers include:

Access to towers: Often it is very difficult and time-consuming to attempt collocating on existing communications towers.

In many cases, services providers planning to implement new cellular or wireless internet sites are forced to construct their own towers.

This creates an inefficient use of valuable capital and time.

Infrastructure Barriers

Dubreuilville/Brunswick House First Nation
Phase 2, 3 & 4
November 2017

- Phase 2 – Secure Vendor Partner
- Phase 3 – Secure Funding
  - Bell Canada submitted & was successful under the Connect to Innovation Program in 2019.
  - NSRBN applied for and received complementary funding
    - Included $$ to cover Regional Project Mgt. costs for Phase 2 & 3 for the remaining 8 communities.
- Phase 4 – Project Implementation
  - Estimated project completion 2021, including a 46km fibre build.

Regional Phase 2 & 3 Kick-Off
November 2019

- Phase 2 – Secure Vendor Partner
  - Determine the options for vendors based on the recommendations from Phase 1
- Phase 3 – Secure Funding
  - Connect to Innovate (ISED)
  - CRTC Broadband Fund
  - Provincial Funds
  - Private Sector Funds
  - Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)

Phased Approach