

Report to Council – Eastern Ontario Regional Network (Broadband Project) Meeting

Councillor Gibson, Library Bd. Chair Gibson and I attended the EORN project update April 17, 2014 at the Admaston/Bromley Municipal offices. This project began 7 years ago with federal, provincial and private support. The project's main purpose was to bring improved internet access, higher speeds and more affordable rates to the Eastern Ontario region.

"The project, created by the Eastern Ontario Warden's Caucus will improve access to the internet with higher speeds and bandwidth to at least 95 % of homes and businesses in Eastern Ontario."

Unfortunately HCM still remains the in 5%. This decision stems from our lack of our population density, the benchmark being 3 households per square km.

"The network covers an area of more than 50,000 square km and will reach nearly 1 million people. The network is based on a 5,500 km fibre optic backbone with 160 new or improved internet access points..."

The fibre optic backbone ends with an access point at Rolphton. Look for orange tags on the cable at the hydro poles.

"Improved rates and packages for satellite services have been negotiated for rural Eastern Ontario residents and businesses, to ensure preferred pricing for the region."

Our community will continue to be serviced in large part by satellite internet access. We were told that the Xplornet partner has improved its service considerably and now offers 10 Mps (megabytes per second) to customers with no penalty if you are on a contract. There is also an "opt out" provision if DSL (digital service line with Bell Aliant) ever becomes available in any area. If our residents are receiving slower service than this they should contact Xplornet. We were advised that Xplornet customers should "get off the Legacy system" for faster service.

"In 2013, the project garnered international recognition for improving broadband access when it was shortlisted for an award by the Broadband World Forum."

The EORN will be in operation until 2024 or 10 more years of business until the rural network is turned over to the private sector. At this time the infrastructure will require "refreshing".

How much would it cost to build the fibre optic backbone along the highway?

Approximately \$20 per metre, access points into households, municipal roads etc. are extra.

Where do we go from here?

In my opinion, as a municipality we should continue to plead our case in addressing the digital divide in our rural community with our local members of federal and provincial government. In the 21st century this is an economic and educational imperative.

For more information about the EORN:

Communications Dept. info@eorn.ca and 613-925-7010

Councillor Debbi Grills