

Bancroft might get higher speed Internet



Grant Roughley, vice-president of North Frontenac Telephone Company, speaks with Bancroft councillors about his company's feasibility study of the area. TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

Bancroft council was told this week that its homes and businesses could be linked by fibre-optic cable to the main line of the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN), allowing them to get much faster and more reliable downloading and uploading speeds. Grant Roughley, vice-president of North Frontenac Telephone, an independent telephone and Internet company based in Sharbot Lake, stated that his company wanted to help smaller communities increase their bandwidth size and speed. He noted that with increasing delivery of entertainment programs via streaming, these increases were vital. However, larger telecom enterprises are often reluctant to invest capital in small markets.

Roughley stated that North Frontenac is conducting a preliminary analysis to see where their service would be a "good fit"; Bancroft was identified as one of these places. The company was in the process of doing a design model analysis and cost assessment for "bringing fibre to the home," given local conditions.

If the results are favourable, the next step would be to bring in design teams to selected areas like Haliburton, Minden, and Bancroft. If all continued to project well, North Frontenac could begin installing cable this summer.

There are still hurdles to surmount. Even though the CRTC mandates open access, Bell and Hydro require submissions and engineering reports to use their poles for North Frontenac fibre-optic cables. The company also needs town approval to lay its cable. North Frontenac is not seeking any town funding for the project, but the municipality might help speed up the process.

Roughley indicated that any introduction of the new service might need to be phased in, with homes and businesses close to the main fibre-optic hub having first access. Homes further out would require the erection of new "line-of-sight" towers.

As for what might be possible with the new system, Roughley stated that 20 megabytes per second for both downloads and uploads is the new minimum speed for effective use of the Internet. He noted that high speed is needed not only by households, but by services such as tele-health (interaction with distant specialists), as well as banks and town administrations.

Asked if fees would be uniform across the area, Roughley indicated that regional variations were possible, as well as different rates depending on the speed of service requested. However, North Frontenac was determined to be competitive in the prices it charges for phone, cable TV, and Internet. If it couldn't provide service at market rates, it wouldn't undertake the project. They could, however, undertake the project should they slash one of their services, such as cable TV - an option which North Frontenac won't be pursuing. Although it does pose the question, who would be okay with having their cable service stopped in favor of having a higher speed internet service? Or vice-versa, perhaps one day in the future this could be the only logical option, especially if you were to see [cable tv statistics click here](#) and were to see how entertainment streaming services could possibly outshine cable TV in the future should the stats of "cord-cutters" keep continuing as they have.

Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins then introduced a resolution supporting the installation of high-speed Internet capacity for area homes, businesses, services and associations at speeds that would meet projected future demand. Council unanimously agreed.

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