

Sod breaking ceremony for fibre optic cables in South Algonquin



By Michael Riley

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South Algonquin Township and Algonquin Fibre had a sod breaking ceremony in Whitney on April 16 for the new fibre optic cables that are being installed for better Internet and television services beginning this month. The cables are slated to be fully operational in Whitney and Madawaska by the end of 2025. Mayor Ethel LaValley and Matthew Young, president of Algonquin Fiber, comment on this sod breaking for the new project. Weekly updates will be available on the Algonquin Fiber website at www.algonquinfiber.com as well as on the South Algonquin Township Facebook page. Any questions can be directed to Works Superintendent Steven Ronholm at 613-334-5447 or works@southalgonquin.ca.

This fibre optic project goes back to a report that CAO Bryan Martin presented at the March 5 meeting, to address bringing better Internet, television and cell service to the township and the history of this initiative over the past 18 months. We previously wrote about this project in the article 'Fibre optic Internet coming to South Algonquin' in the March 19 edition of The Bancroft Times.

Martin revealed that the new fibre optic network would service Whitney and Madawaska communities within South Algonquin and will offer high speed fibre optic Internet and television services to both residents and business in these areas. The installation started this month and will likely be fully operational by the end of 2025, although some areas may get access sooner. Martin said that staff will continue to look for solutions to bring better access to our rural areas outside of Whitney and Madawaska. Bancroft This Week asked Martin for any updates on this access for the areas outside of Whitney and Madawaska on April 16, and he said that the township was still looking into it to provide the best and most cost-effective service to these rural residents.

Algonquin Fiber, who is taking on the work of putting in the fibre optic cables in Whitney and Madawaska through its approved contractor Spy Communications, is an Internet service provider located in the Lake of Bays and surrounding area, and is committed to providing fast, reliable and affordable Internet to communities using fiber to the home technology. For more information, go to their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/algonquinfiber or their website at www.algonquinfiber.com.

Fibre optic networks are made up of cables containing strands of glass thinner than a human hair that transmits information in the form of infrared light pulses. They deliver more bandwidth than copper cables, which most forms of traditional Internet service use to transfer information, since they transmit data through light. For example, one optical fibre can carry 90,000 television channels and three million voice calls.

LaValley told Bancroft This Week that the sod breaking and the installation of the cables was exciting.

?It's a work in progress. We're not going to get everybody right away but it's hopeful and it'll be better services for our residents. It could be a map for the future in terms of greater coverage for both residents and for businesses. So I'm thrilled. After all the upset and negativity it's nice to have something positive,? she says.

Steven Ronholm, the public works superintendent, says that work on phase one fibre installation in Whitney has been progressing well given the weather they've had since the work commenced.

?The coordination on Algonquin Fiber's side with the township has been great so far. Work is planned to continue on the next phases of fibre Installation in Whitney over the next few months and once completed Algonquin Fiber will be moving to the Village of Madawaska to commence fibre installation. So far there hasn't been any unforeseen difficulties,? he says.

Young told Bancroft This Week that each village, Whitney and Madawaska, has been partitioned into phases, nine for Whitney and four or five for Madawaska, and that Whitney is currently having the fibre optic cable installed in phase one. He says it should be done by July or August and Madawaska will have its work done in the fall to meet the end of 2025 deadline.

?It's good. It was a lot of work in a short period of time. Conversations started just before Christmas and we knew this was an end of year deadline, so we put our noses to the grindstone. A lot of people said there was a lot of stuff that couldn't be done but we have done bigger stuff before and we got at it. And quite honestly with the assistance of the township things wouldn't have moved as fast. Just having their support and any questions we had, they were so responsive. Honestly, that was a big part of it, why we were able to move along so quickly.?