



# THE LINDSAY POST

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\$1 GST INCLUDED

PROUD TO SERVE THE CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES

## Broadband helps level field

### *Broadband internet to be in place by June 30, 2008*

**JOHN CHAMBERS**  
Lindsay Post Managing Editor

**KAWARTHA LAKES** - Time is money, and when it comes to transferring data, time is everything.

Access to information is playing a greater role in both work and personal lives, but it must be delivered quickly.

In recent years, communities along the Highway 401 corridor to the south have slowly been brought online with new technologies, faster technologies and by and large more choices - most notably Bell Canada's DSL service or Cable.

Despite the major corridor growth, municipalities further north, including the City of Kawartha Lakes, continue to lag behind their urban cousins to the east and west and south.

While large portions of Lindsay's "downtown core" are serviced, outlying areas rely on dial-up service.

This creates not only economic hardships for municipalities fighting to attract new residential development and growth, but also the larger big ticket developments in the business, commercial and industrial sectors.

Broadband, not unlike water and sewer, is simply a type of infrastructure and more and more people are coming to expect those infrastructures to be in place.

"It's an infrastructure issue," said George Borovilos, director with the Business Development Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Economic Development Division. "There are hard and soft infrastructures, hard being water, sewer, connectivity, and soft being the people."

Borovilos, former manager of economic development for Northumberland County, said during his time in the southern municipality the lack of high speed broadband wasn't one of the major factors in dealing with larger developments, but it was certainly a critical factor for smaller communities.

"People need high speed," he said. "It affects entrepreneurship and small business, and it is even more important for small communities."

For most rural portions of the City of Kawartha Lakes, with few exceptions, residents are forced to contend with the painfully slow speed and inconvenience of dial-up Internet.

The difference between a dial-up mo-

dem and broadband connection is substantial. To give you an idea, a three and a half minute MP3 music file takes about 18 minutes to download using a dial-up modem, but only about 20 seconds on a broadband link.

But a person's need for speed aside, despite a pledge by the federal government in 2000 to ensure high speed broadband in every Canadian



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community, the plan failed, and rural communities are slipping further behind in being able to compete for the businesses that will attract further tax dollars.

In October 2000, the federal government established the goal of ensuring that broadband networks and services are available to businesses and residents in all Canadian communities by 2005.

In doing so, officials said at the time that broadband is a fundamental infrastructure for building Canadian nationhood in the 21st century similar to the role played in the past by other great revolutions in transportation and communications.

Today, local communities are being forced to pave their own futures and invest in new technologies to meet the growing needs and demands of residents and businesses.

"The key to rural jobs and prosperity

is to provide broadband as an economic tool to all our residents," said Member of Parliament for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock Barry Devolin. "The initiative shown by Kawartha Lakes Council is a tremendous step to increasing the quality of life to those who require high speed internet."

"Broadband service is very important to the social and economic development in communities such as ours," he added. "Our community wants high-speed internet service and at similar speeds and prices to those paid by people in urban and more populated rural centres. Now, people in Kawartha Lakes have access the same online education, health information and business opportunities already enjoyed by those living in more urban or more populated rural centres."

Devolin said that the increased access to broadband will help act as a catalyst for business opportunities in the area.

"Access to high speed broadband networks will translate into strong investments across Kawartha Lakes and open the door to numerous opportunities for all residents, both permanent and seasonal," he said.

Kawartha Lakes council voted recently to award a Request for Proposals to Barrett Xplore, who will now begin rolling out a plan to bring affordable, accessible and efficient broadband access for rural public and private sectors.

Barrett Xplore will be using two different access technologies to ensure that 100 per cent of the city has an affordable broadband option. Approximately 78 per cent of the city will be serviced by fixed point wireless broadband with the remaining areas being serviced by two-way satellite communications.

Council approved the \$550,000 expenditure for the project which is less than the \$800,000 initially estimated. The city was awarded \$243,378.00 from the provincial Rural Connections program earlier this year for the broadband initiative.

Barrett Xplore proposed an aggressive coverage solution and plans to invest \$11 million into the city over the next five years.

"Broadband will bring unprecedented education, health, government and business opportunities to the rural residents of Kawartha Lakes," said Barrett Xplore CEO John Maduri.

Currently Barrett Xplore has one tower live in the city, and five more are planned to be in commercial service in December. Company officials caution however that

the level of coverage being received from these towers may not be representative of what coverage will be like when the entire network is constructed.

"The network towers integrate and operate together as a cohesive whole, and some locations will be supported by signal from multiple locations," explained Xplore's David Conn.

"Our deployments do not necessarily proceed by sector. They are often more driven by the availability of tower locations and dependent in part on whether we can use existing structures (silos, etc) or if towers need to be constructed from scratch."

Conn said in some cases the company may have a number of towers erected and ready, but not be able to place them into service until the one internet transit tower supporting the others is live.

Diane Steven, manager of the City of Kawartha Lakes Small Business Enterprise Centre said bringing high speed broadband to outlying areas will have a profound impact on the many rural business owners she works with.

"When I am talking to my clients who are in these outlying areas they do certainly express frustration," she said. "Simple things such as me trying to communicate with clients who have been through my office by sending emails or newsletters, they can't open it up."

They can't even open up the information, it takes forever to download. I have to make sure I am imbedding things and putting them into their simplest forms - attachments are very challenging for them."

**For more information on DSL technology, visit *The Lindsay Post* online at [www.thepost.ca](http://www.thepost.ca)**

Looking forward, Steven said the realization of high speed broadband in the Kawartha Lakes will mean business owners in currently unserved areas will be able to reach an even greater number of clients and customers.

"Obviously on an individual basis it is going to be terrific for personal use, but as far as business is concerned to be able to use this medium for marketing, for

communicating with customers or prospects, being able to advise them of any specials of deals or any services that are available that they may not have even considered before because it just wasn't an option," she said.

"The e-commerce aspect is going to be a benefit; being able to make sales via the Internet, making their website interactive so that it can reach further afield and they can actually fulfill their customers' needs. Right now they are having to maintain a business on a fairly low tech basis, or they have already invested independently on technology that they had to source on their own."

Conn said Barrett Xplore's technical plan is currently in the preliminary stage and being finalized.

"It is difficult to be more specific at this time," he said. "Our current focus is finalizing and securing tower locations."

Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock MPP Laurie Scott said the arrival of high speed to all areas of the city was great news for the entire region.

"I think it's great," she said. "The increase benefit to our area, I don't think we can imagine how big the impact is going to be."

"The benefits certainly to health care, education, the economic development stimulus is just great," Scott added. "I think we probably underestimate how big an impact it will have on our area and we can certainly use it as a stimulator for our area. I am glad that we pushed and pushed to get this addressed."

Kawartha Lakes Mayor Ric McGee said high speed broadband coming to the entire city offers another exciting opportunity for residents and businesses.

"This is another opportunity for the people and businesses in the City of Kawartha Lakes to attract more traffic, as well as being able to expand business opportunities by taking advantage of state-of-the-art technology," said McGee. "Whether it is allowing seasonal residents the opportunity to spend more time in the area by being able to stay connected to their workplaces elsewhere, or attracting new residents to the area with the ability to operate home based business, high speed accessibility throughout 100 percent of the city will be a great catalyst for the entire area."

Barrett Xplore is expected to have their high speed infrastructure in place with 100 per cent coverage by June 30, 2008.