

## City partners with Xplorenet to get rural residents online

by Cheryl Brink  
Stittsville Weekender  
The city of Ottawa's allocation of \$1 million to help bring broadband internet to rural residents is finally paying off.

Barrett Xplors Inc., based out of Fredricton, New Brunswick, won a bid to provide the service to all the rural, remote areas in the city of Ottawa.

The company, along with city staff, presented the new options to residents at an open house at the Canadian Golf and Country Club on highway seven west of Stittsville on Monday, November 26.

Rideau-Goulbourn ward councillor Glenn Brooks said the push for internet in rural areas has been around since 2003 and it is about time things are happening.

"It's been a project in the making for several years," he said.

"It's been a long time, but it's so worth it."

Ottawa has promised \$1 million to help with infrastructure and education; the company will be paying out another \$10 million to provide the service.

At the information session, district sales manager Len McGinn laid out the background of the company

and the options people now have to access high-speed in their homes.

"It's the largest and fastest growing company with rural access," said Mr. McGinn about the family-owned Barrett Xplors.

"I believe the city of Ottawa is the only municipality in North America that has broadband for every citizen in the city," said Chris Cope, economic development consultant for the city.

The company, offering internet services under the trade name Xplorenet, plans to provide broadband to 35,000 rural residents that either have only dial-up

service or cannot get online at all, filling in the "gap regions".

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Mr. McGinn said the fixed wireless system was in place on November 1 but the company will still have to assess where coverage

reaches and what areas will need more work.

Some people will never be able to get online with wireless, so their best option is satellite.

Though it is more expensive, Xplorenet will install satellite systems for people who want it and will upgrade their service if wireless becomes available as more infrastructure is constructed.

With either system, the high-speed internet will be a huge upgrade.

The fixed wireless can reach 185 times faster than dial-up and costs \$29.99 a month to start with, and satellite, at \$49.99 per month, is also an impressive 75 times quicker. Neither will tie-up phone lines as dial-up internet does.

Though installation fees are not included in the monthly price, Xplorenet claims to be the least expensive broadband service in Canada. They also boast of consistent customer service, with a call centre available for assistance 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Mr. Cope said the broadband will be available to 95 per cent of residents in rural Ottawa, with the remaining five per cent unable to access the service simply because of geography.

Within three weeks of putting infrastructure in place, Xplorenet has around 1,000 customers and is expecting many more, adding to their 350,000 individual and business clients nationwide.

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Santa Claus puts a 2008 city of Ottawa draft budget booklet under the Christmas tree for city of Ottawa Stittsville/Kanata West ward councillor Shad Qadri, something which councillor Qadri will need

during next week's budget deliberations by city council, during his visit to councillor Qadri's Christmas open house gathering at his ward office on Saturday, December 1. Photo by Randy Crawford.

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"It's an excellent uptake," said Mr. Cope about the registration numbers so far. "They are very pleased, as is the city."

The consultant estimated there are 18,000 homes in rural Ottawa without coverage, down 60 per cent from the 80,000 that could not access high-speed a few years ago.

He said a three-year long project that finished in 2006 brought broadband to rural communities from big-name providers such as Bell.

He said the more remote users, the ones that now have Xplorenent as an option, were not offered the service from the main providers because they could not make money delivering to the city's rural outskirts.

That issue, as well as the lack of pro-

vincial and federal government funding, motivated the city to put aside cash and ask for bids to cover the rural areas.

"It's a good partnership," said Mr. Cope about the winning Barrett Xplore proposal. "We're happy with the move."

"Broadband opens windows and doors to the world," said councillor Brooks.

Those interested in the service offer can call a local dealer listed on the Xplorenent website.

The company is holding more public information sessions across Ottawa as well where customers can sign up for the high-speed.

Mr. Cope said he was pleased with the turnout at the November 26 meeting at the Canadian Golf and Country Club where people could ask one-on-one questions of the Xplorenent employees and providers.

## Tree ornaments homemade at Museum

Anyone who wants elegant festive decorations should consider attending an "Elegant Ornaments" program coming up at the Goulbourn Museum.

This will be an afternoon of ornament creativity, with participants creating beautiful ornaments while enjoying hot beverages and tempting treats.

Participants will be able to choose between two

themed ornament kits. One is a traditional kit that will result in three ornaments with classic shades of red and green.

The other is the Wintry White kit that will result in three ornaments with icy shimmer and natural creamy hues.

All this will be possible for just \$20 per person, with all materials and refreshments being provided by the

Goulbourn Museum.

The program will be held this Sunday, December 9 starting at 1:30 p.m. at the Goulbourn Museum at Stanley's Corners just south of Stittsville.

However, spaces in this program are limited.

Those wishing to attend should call the Goulbourn Museum at 613-831-2393 as soon as possible to reserve a spot.