

Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee

April 2024



Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Overview of SBAC & Membership**
- **Our Understanding of the SK Context**
- **2022 Broadband Survey Findings**
- **A 'Proposed' Investment Framework**
- **Key Recommendations**
- **Roundtable Q&A**

Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee (SBAC)

Background & Purpose

The Saskatchewan Broadband Advisory Committee is a cross-sector and community-based network of provincial, local and Indigenous organizations, formed through a shared and collective concern and understanding over the issues and lost opportunities for all citizens related to broadband connectivity across Saskatchewan.

The key focus of the Committee is to:

- Assist with addressing long-standing connectivity issues.
- Advise and direct actions leading to a shared provincial strategy, investment, and vision of success and change.

Who We Represent

- Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities
- Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce
- Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations
- Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association
- Saskatchewan School Boards Association
- Saskatchewan Indigenous Economic Development Network
- Saskatchewan Economic Development Alliance
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
- Clarence Campeau Development Fund
- Regional Colleges of Saskatchewan
- Industry participation (SaskTel, Telesat, FlexNetworks, Wood River, Access, and Xplornet)



Our Collective Vision:

Committee members have committed to promote the following shared vision statements:

By 2025, Saskatchewan's broadband infrastructure would have achieved parity for 100% of Saskatchewan residents (50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload), regardless of location and community.

By 2030, 100% of Saskatchewan citizens exceed the CRTC standard by accessing 100 Mbps download and 50 Mbps upload, regardless of location and community.

Problem Statement

Four essential areas of challenge persist regarding our ability to advance broadband connectivity within the province of Saskatchewan:

- 1. Lack of Shared Leadership & A Common Provincial Plan**
- 2. Technology & Infrastructure re: Population & Cost**
- 3. Limited / Complex Financial Supports & Incentives**
- 4. Regional Capacity, Planning & Innovation**

Some of the more general issues noted by stakeholders include:

- “A lack of equal opportunity, and the very real prospect and fears that some within our province will fall further behind” related to access to education, health, and improved social wellness.
- From a business perspective, there is a very real disadvantage for some in participating and succeeding in a modern economy.
- From an Indigenous perspective, these issues and barriers only serve to compound pre-existing challenges related to employment and work barriers, business interruptions, community safety concerns, accessing health and wellness services, as well as training and educational barriers.
- According to the CRTC Communications Monitoring Report 2019, only 41% of rural households and about 25% of Indigenous communities in Canada have access to high-quality, reliable broadband internet services.

Saskatchewan's Dilemma

Lowest Investment Per Capita

Since 2015, Saskatchewan continues to receive the lowest per capita investment from the Federal Government (2.46% of total federal dollars) when compared with federal broadband investments distributed across Canada.

Persistent Digital Divide

The recent Federal Auditor's Report further highlighted Saskatchewan's lagging position in terms of services for 'rural and remote communities and First Nations'. While nearly 91 per cent of Canadian households had access to high-speed internet in 2021, just 59.5 per cent of those in rural and remote areas enjoyed the same access. That number drops to 42.9 per cent for households on First Nations. The Auditor General's report further noted "the persistent digital divide for people living on First Nations and in rural and remote communities".

Saskatchewan's Dilemma

Below National Standards

At the local provincial level, SBAC's 2022 Saskatchewan Broadband Survey, **53%** of respondents indicated they ARE NOT or DO NOT have access to broadband 50/10 high-speed internet.

No Provincial Plan

Saskatchewan remains one of only a few provinces with NO Provincial Plan or Strategy related to improving broadband infrastructure.

Continued Loss of Investment

Municipal and First Nations Community leaders have shared their frustrations with the Committee regarding the growing gap in connectivity, its impact on community innovation, and a continued loss of investment and business opportunities to other neighbouring provinces.

A Cross Canada Comparison



A Cross Canada Comparison

ALBERTA

Plan	Goals	Programming/Priorities	Funding/Outcomes
Alberta Broadband Strategy 2022	Connect 200,000 households across Alberta. Reach 100% connectivity across the province by the end of 2026-2027 fiscal year.	The Broadband Strategy includes several programs like the Starlink pilot program. Improving access, affordability, and quality of internet services	\$780 million from Federal and Provincial governments \$36 million for the Alberta Broadband Fund

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Plan	Goals	Programming/Priorities	Funding/Outcomes
Connecting British Columbia	The program's core strategy involves accelerating the delivery of high-speed internet connectivity to rural communities.	North Dev. Initiative collaborates with community to address connectivity challenges. The Kaslo infoNet Society (KiN) exemplifies successful community-driven efforts to improve internet access.	Desired outcomes focus on ensuring investments in connectivity support the expected delivery of internet services, reducing investment risk, and effectively addressing gaps in current connectivity.

A Cross Canada Comparison

NOVA SCOTIA

Plan	Goals	Programming/Priorities	Funding/Outcomes
Established Build Nova Scotia.	Deliver reliable, high-speed Internet access to 99.99% of homes and business.	Satellite Internet Services Rebate plus the Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust.	As of March 2024, approx. 94,500 homes and businesses connected. To date, have 98% coverage reached. A total of \$184.9M , leveraging an additional \$189.7M from other funds, plus \$138.8M from private sector.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Plan	Goals	Programming/Priorities	Funding/Outcomes
Rural and Northern Communities Infrastructure	Improve fixed wireless internet service for 83,000 rural households and businesses.	Priorities include economic growth, social inclusiveness, and environmental well-being.	The Universal Broadband Fund has allocated \$150 million as well as an additional \$50 million.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Plan	Goals	Programming/Priorities	Funding/Outcomes
Technology Innovation Program	Achieve 100% connectivity by 2030	Priorities include economic recovery post-pandemic and enhancing services for residents. The collaboration aims to bridge the digital divide.	\$116 million from the Federal Government and \$20 million from the Provincial Government

2022 Provincial Broadband Survey

Snapshot of Responses

53%

of respondents indicated they ARE NOT or DO NOT have access to broadband 50/10 high-speed internet or better.

38%

of respondents who are able to access high-speed internet said they were dissatisfied with their current service provider.

45%

of survey respondents who do not have access to high-speed internet said a broadband plan is a priority for their community.

51%

of survey respondents who are able to access high speed internet said they are dissatisfied with the advertised speed from their internet provider

38%

of survey respondents who are able to access high speed internet said infrastructure is stopping them from upgrading their internet service

98%

of respondents who do not have access to high-speed internet said they do not have a formal broadband connectivity plan in place.

Building Blocks to Achieve Our Vision

The Committee has identified four key building blocks that will help guide achievement of the above noted vision statement.

1. Enhanced awareness, local capacity and digital competency

Building Blocks to Achieve Our Vision

The Committee has identified four key building blocks that will help guide achievement of the above noted vision statement.

**1. Enhanced awareness, local capacity
and digital competency**

**2. Strengthened industry partnerships
and market development**

Building Blocks to Achieve Our Vision

The Committee has identified four key building blocks that will help guide achievement of the above noted vision statement.

1. Enhanced awareness, local capacity and digital competency

2. Strengthened industry partnerships and market development

3. Elevated community access and infrastructure development

Building Blocks to Achieve Our Vision

The Committee has identified four key building blocks that will help guide achievement of the above noted vision statement.

1. Enhanced awareness, local capacity and digital competency

2. Strengthened industry partnerships and market development

3. Elevated community access and infrastructure development

4. Improved regional and Indigenous collaboration, and stakeholder partnerships

2023 Key Recommendations

The Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee is recommending the following key recommendations be adopted by the **Province of Saskatchewan**:

1. Receive the attached Broadband Investment Framework as a starting point to establishing a province-wide broadband connectivity strategy for Saskatchewan.

2. Establish a \$3.0M to \$4.0M annual broadband grant in support of:

- Enhanced awareness, community and business capacity, education, and digital competency; and,
- Improved local, regional and Indigenous broadband planning and collaboration.

3. Development of a \$50.0M to \$100.0M infrastructure development fund to achieve the following:

- Incentivize industry to expand their reach to areas and communities that Internet Services Providers consider non-viable economic areas of the province; and,
- Renewal and improvement of the existing broadband infrastructure

4. Creation of an Industry Collaboration Table, chaired by the Province of Saskatchewan, charged with improving market competition, refining federal and provincial policies that hinder a level playing field, and promoting greater industry collaboration.

2023 Key Recommendations

The Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee has also identified the following key recommendations for the **Federal Government**:

- 1. Work with the SBAC Committee to establish an Industry Table that meets regularly with the Federal Government officials that enables greater dialogue with local ISPs and helps to address Prairie-specific policy issues and market barriers.**
- 2. Establish a Prairies Broadband Capacity Fund that provides matching funding in support of community awareness, community capacity development, and greater regional planning.**
- 3. With respect to Broadband Infrastructure Funding, SBAC strongly recommends the following directives:**
 - That the Federal Government get beyond funding based on a percentage of population; and,
 - Immediately begin to release much needed broadband funding from the UBF in order for our local ISPs to continue with vital investment in broadband infrastructure.
- 4. How do we get CRTC (UBF) to recognize the role and capital investment levels of SaskTel?**

Thank you for your time & invitation!

Jay Meyer

SARM

Jmeyer@SARM.CA

306-761-3721
