



Connecting Northumberland Rural Broadband Expansion Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

PROJECT BACKGROUND

1) What is the objective of the project?

In March 2008, the Government of Ontario announced a \$30 million, four-year Rural Connections Broadband Program designed to reduce broadband infrastructure gaps in underserved rural regions in southern Ontario. Rural Connections will have a positive impact on families in rural Ontario by leveraging broadband infrastructure investment from private-sector businesses and public partners to enhance economic development and improve access to public services such as e-learning, e-health and e-government. For more information on the Rural Connections program, visit <http://omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/ruralconnections/broadband.htm>.

In Northumberland County, Barrett Xplore Inc. will work with County and Municipal representatives to accelerate the provision of broadband coverage to identified rural areas where high-speed Internet service has been previously unavailable. The *Connecting Northumberland* project will also ensure that rural residents receive an Internet experience that is affordable, reliable and comparable to service in urban areas.

2) Who are the parties involved in the project?

Rural Connections is led and administered by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) in partnership with the Ministries of Government Services (MGS) and Small Business and Consumer Services (MSBCS). Northumberland County will receive up to \$976,883 in funding from OMAFRA. Barrett Xplore Inc. (BXI) operates Xplornet Internet Services, Canada's largest rural broadband provider. BXI was chosen at the conclusion of a rigorous, technology neutral, competitive bidding process to be the vendor of choice to construct, own and operate a fixed wireless network which will provide the additional coverage. The contract between BXI and Northumberland County is presently being finalized. Over the first 5 years of the project, BXI plans to invest approximately \$5.5 million in Northumberland County.

3) What is "broadband?"

Broadband (also referred to as high-speed Internet) is defined as a high-capacity, two-way link between an individual user and the Internet that has a minimum download speed of up to 1.5 Mbps. This minimum download speed is required to support today's

technology and applications – such as watching videos on YouTube, playing games online and downloading music. The technology providing the Broadband services can be either wired (as in cable or DSL) or wireless (fixed wireless or satellite) as offered by BXI in this project. Using fixed wireless service in regions with the topography and population density of Northumberland is generally the most economical.

TIMING

4) When will the project be completed?

The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009. Xplornet has existing fixed wireless towers currently serving Northumberland County residents. Once the formal agreement is signed, Xplornet will substantially expand the existing network. The network has been designed and tower locations are being finalized.

TECHNOLOGY & COVERAGE

5) What type of technology will be used? Will everyone within the project area be able to access the network?

Xplornet will primarily use licensed fixed wireless technology, supplemented by coverage utilizing unlicensed spectrum in some areas. Licensed spectrum allows Xplornet to offer service that is free from potential radio frequency (RF) interference from other wireless signals (e.g. other wireless Internet service providers, corporate and industrial wireless communication or monitoring systems, etc). The majority of the expanded network within Northumberland County will operate on Xplornet's licensed frequency and some current broadcast locations will also be upgraded to utilize licensed spectrum equipment.

Fixed wireless does have some coverage limitations as it is a line-of-sight technology. Therefore, a small percentage of homes or businesses may not be able to receive a fixed wireless signal due to obstructions or topography. Xplornet can provide satellite broadband technology to serve those residents who are unable to access the expanded fixed wireless network once it is fully deployed.

6) Will the project provide high-speed Internet coverage to all of the broadband gap areas of the County?

The fixed wireless network will substantially reduce the underserved and un-served areas of the County but it will not cover the entire gap. Once construction of the new network is completed, it is anticipated that the vast majority of the dwellings within the current broadband gap will be within the new fixed wireless footprint. Xplornet estimates that approximately 7,000 additional households will be within the geographic footprint of the expanded network.

7) How will I know if I am within the planned new fixed wireless coverage area?

To determine if you are in the fixed wireless coverage area, you can:

1. Provide your contact information to Xplornet via their no obligation sign-up form - <http://www.xplornet.com/signup.php> or
2. Contact Xplornet Customer Care, available 24/7/365 at 1-866-841-6001. Select the “Are you interested in Signing up for Internet Services” option, and mention to the customer representative who answers that you are from Northumberland County.

Xplornet will contact you when service becomes available in your area.

Once construction of the entire network is complete, or if you are within the new coverage footprint of one of the recently constructed towers, a local Authorized Xplornet Dealer will be able to assist you. The local Authorized Xplornet Dealer will verify the availability of fixed wireless at your location and schedule an installation.

8) What is the difference between fixed wireless service and satellite service?

Both Xplornet services use wireless technologies. Both require the installation of radio equipment at your home or business to communicate with either the wireless network radio towers or the satellite in space. For more information about fixed wireless, please click [here](#).

Most residents will prefer the fixed wireless alternative as the monthly service fees are currently less than for satellite service. Also, any signal you send from your computer via satellite has to travel over 22,000 miles to space and back again on both the forward and return trip in order to deliver your information. This typically creates a sub-second lag referred to as latency. For this reason, satellite service may not be ideal for any Internet activity requiring real-time data transfer (examples include online trading and gaming, or any other activity requiring the real-time exchange of information).

Nonetheless, satellite may be the only option for residents outside of the fixed wireless coverage area, or for the small percentage of residents within the coverage area who cannot obtain line-of-sight due to obstructions or topography. For more information about satellite, please click [here](#).

9) If I’m an existing Xplornet satellite customer and I’m located within the new fixed wireless coverage area can I switch services?

Yes. You qualify for a special conversion offer. Xplornet will contact you with further details once construction of the fixed wireless network is complete.

SERVICE & PRICING INFORMATION

10) What equipment do I need and how much does it cost?

For fixed wireless, a local Authorized Xplornet Dealer will attach a compact subscriber module (about the size of a book) typically to the outside of your house and supply an AC adaptor and an Ethernet cable which connects the subscriber module to your computer. There is a nominal subscriber module rental cost which is included in the advertised monthly service fee. As Xplornet retains ownership of the equipment, the

subscriber module carries a limited lifetime warranty. Your local dealer will install the equipment for a one-time fee. Typically, the fee for Basic Installation is \$199 or more. Northumberland County residents are currently entitled to a promotional offer from Xplornet which substantially reduces this cost:

- New customers subscribing to a service package with a 3-year term will receive Basic Installation for only \$99 (Zip package excluded).
- New customers subscribing to a service package with a 2-year term will receive Basic Installation for only \$149 (Zip package excluded).

A one-time activation fee of \$49 also applies to all terms.

In some cases, the installation of fixed wireless may require additional hardware or cabling at the time of installation (for which additional charges may apply).

11) How much does the monthly service cost?

Fixed wireless service packages start at \$29.99/month, and broadband packages (up to 1.5 Mbps or higher download speed) start at \$44.99/month. Additional details are available by clicking [here](#), or from a local Authorized Dealer or via the Xplornet Customer Care centre at 1-866-841-6001.

12) How fast is the service?

Fixed wireless download speeds can reach up to 5.0 Mbps (where available), which is up to 125 times faster than dial-up.*

*Actual speed online may vary with your choice of package, technical configuration, Internet traffic, server or other factors. When compared to a standard dial-up modem speed of 40 kbps.

13) Do I have to sign a contract?

A minimum term of one year is required for fixed wireless. Incentives are offered for 2 and 3-year terms.

Xplornet also offers a 30 day money back guarantee. If you are dissatisfied with your service for any reason, you will receive a refund if you cancel your subscription within 30 days of activation. Visit <http://www.xplornet.com/legal.php> for complete details.

TO SUBSCRIBE OR OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION

14) How can I subscribe? How do I locate a local Authorized Xplornet Dealer in my area?

To find a local dealer so that you may subscribe for service once it becomes available in your area, visit <http://www.xplornet.com/signup.php> or call Customer Care at 1-866-841-6001. Alternatively, the [Xplornet Web site](#) has a Dealer Locator tool that will provide you with a map and driving directions from your address to dealers in your area.

Please contact Xplornet directly, the County and Municipal offices are not collecting names from those interested in subscribing.

15) How can I obtain more information about the project?

Periodic project updates will be available on both the Northumberland County (www.northumberlandcounty.ca) and Xplornet (www.xplornet.com) Web sites.

CITIZEN CONCERNS, PROJECT FUNDING & OMAFRA PROGRAM DETAILS

16) How can I obtain more information about the Ontario Rural Connections Broadband Program?

For more information regarding the Rural Connections Program, please visit <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/rural/ruralconnections/broadband.htm>

17) How will the project be funded?

Under the Provincial program, OMAFRA will contribute up to \$976,883. Barrett Xplore Inc. plans to invest approximately \$5.5 million in Northumberland County during the first five years of the project.

18) If I have a site that I am willing to have a tower constructed on – who do I contact?

While the preference of Xplornet is to provide service from existing structures, there may be locations where it is necessary to build a new tower. Please send details to info@xplornet.com.

19) How will this project impact the existing smaller internet service providers in the County?

The objective of the Ontario Rural Connections Broadband Program is to provide broadband access to rural areas that are currently un-served or underserved, not to increase competition in existing high-speed service areas. The network that Xplornet will deploy in Northumberland has been designed to expand coverage to specific “broadband gap” areas identified by the County. In accordance with the open access requirements of the Rural Connections Program, Barrett Xplore will allow other Internet service providers to have access to the network under appropriate terms and conditions.

The majority of the expanded network will utilize equipment broadcasting in licensed spectrum frequency bands. Therefore, the wireless signal will not interfere with the signal of other providers. In those areas where unlicensed spectrum is utilized, BXI will work with other providers to mitigate potential interference.

20) Why is high-speed Internet access so important? Why are the Province and the County investing in improving coverage? Why are some of my tax dollars being used to subsidize this initiative?

Today, all levels of government increasingly consider high-speed Internet access to be a virtual necessity – as important to a community’s economic and social well-being as roads or electricity. In the absence of high-speed Internet access, economic development within the County and the provision of services to residents is seriously impaired. As the private and public sector increasingly move to more self-service, lower-cost solutions, and utilize quick response communication vehicles which provide easier and more transparent access to information, both the Internet and technology has become the cornerstone for such initiatives.

Examples of such developments within the past few years include:

- 1) E-Government – access to government services from Web portals on the Internet. It is increasingly difficult for businesses to bid on government contracts without access to high-speed Internet.
- 2) E-Health – provision of health care using technology enabled means.
- 3) E-Agriculture – use of the Internet for research, collaboration, education, marketing, business development and crop and livestock management
- 4) E-Business – companies are providing more services online – from advertising to product fulfillment. Consumers can also obtain information and then purchase goods and services via e-commerce enabled methods.
- 5) E-Learning – delivery of training and course material online.
- 6) Communications – the majority of communications to both organizations (businesses, non-profit and government) and individual users is now being provided over the Internet - for example via email and through Web sites. Offices are now connected together through virtual private networks or wide area networks enabling employees to telecommute. Virtual meetings, Internet-based telephone service, and file and information sharing through the use of Web portals is now commonplace.
- 7) Social Networking – interacting with others and sharing information through Web portals, video sharing, and sending pictures electronically to family and friends. Internet-based dating and social interaction Web sites such as Facebook or MySpace are becoming increasingly popular.
- 8) Entertainment – the Internet can be used to purchase and download multi-media material such as music, radio broadcasts, TV shows, movies, etc. on a permanent or temporary basis. People can also play games with others online.