

Township of North Kawartha

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www.northkawartha.ca

Report to Council

To: Mayor and Council Members
From: Edward Hilton, Economic Development Officer
Date: July 27, 2026
Subject: Broadband & Wireless Connectivity in North Kawartha July 2026 Update

Recommendation:

That Council receive the report for information.

Background:

Reliable broadband and wireless connectivity are essential infrastructure for North Kawartha's residents, businesses, community organizations, emergency services, and visitors. Dependable telecommunications services support business operations, tourism, remote work, education, access to health and government services, public safety, and quality of life.

North Kawartha's geographic size, rural settlement pattern, seasonal population fluctuations, and limited telecommunications infrastructure present ongoing connectivity challenges. While recent public and private investments have improved service in some areas, significant concerns remain regarding broadband availability, wireless network capacity, service reliability, and infrastructure resiliency.

Over the past several years, the Township has monitored the progress of provincial and regional connectivity initiatives, including Ontario's Accelerated High-Speed Internet Program (AHSIP) and the Eastern Ontario Regional Network's (EORN) Cell Gap Project. Staff have also communicated with telecommunications providers, government relations representatives, EORN, and Ministry of Infrastructure staff regarding service conditions and infrastructure projects affecting North Kawartha.

The Township is affected by several separate telecommunications projects and service issues:

- North Kawartha is included in AHSIP Lot 10, which was awarded to Rogers Communications;



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- Bell Canada was awarded the neighbouring AHSIP Lot 35 project (Highlands East), which includes fibre infrastructure from the Bell Apsley Central Office (CO) toward Eels Lake;
- Rogers has activated new wireless infrastructure (LTE\5G) in North Kawartha through the EORN Cell Gap Project; and
- Bell wireless, landline telephone, and DSL customers continue to experience service reliability and capacity concerns.

These initiatives and service issues are discussed separately in the Analysis section of this report.

Analysis:

AHSIP Lot 10: Rogers

North Kawartha forms part of the Accelerated High-Speed Internet Program (AHSIP) service area known as Lot 10, which was awarded to Rogers Communications.

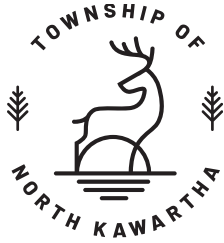
The AHSIP project was intended to expand access to high-speed internet service in underserved and unserved areas. Despite the original five-year program period, staff are not aware of any residential or business fibre connections that have been activated within North Kawartha through the Lot 10 project.

Rogers did not have an established fibre network footprint within the Township when it was awarded the project. While planning and project development activities have taken place, the anticipated benefits of the AHSIP investment have not yet resulted in service activation for North Kawartha residents or businesses.

The lack of new fibre service is particularly significant for businesses and community facilities located along the Township's principal transportation and commercial corridors. Many users continue to rely on aging copper-based DSL infrastructure, fixed wireless services, satellite internet, or other alternatives.

Satellite internet, including Starlink, provides an important option for rural and difficult-to-serve properties. However, satellite service does not eliminate the need for reliable, scalable, and high-capacity fixed broadband infrastructure within established communities and commercial areas.

Staff will continue to seek updates from Rogers, EORN, government relations representatives, and Ministry of Infrastructure staff regarding the status of Lot 10 and anticipated deployment timelines within North Kawartha.



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AHSIP Lot 35: Bell

Bell Canada was awarded the neighbouring AHSIP service area known as Lot 35.

As part of the Lot 35 project, Bell constructed fibre infrastructure from Apsley toward the Eels Lake area. Some Bell customers within the Eels Lake project area have now had fibre-optic service activated and are receiving service through the new infrastructure.

The activation of fibre service for some customers is a positive development and demonstrates the potential benefits of broadband infrastructure investment in rural communities. Fibre-optic service can provide increased capacity, greater reliability, and improved scalability compared with older copper-based DSL infrastructure.

However, the Lot 35 project covers a defined service area and does not address the broader lack of fibre availability throughout North Kawartha. Many businesses, residents, and community facilities elsewhere in the Township continue to rely on older infrastructure or alternative technologies.

Staff will continue to monitor fibre activation within the Lot 35 project area, particularly where the project is close to North Kawartha businesses, residents, and community facilities. Staff will also continue discussions with relevant agencies and service providers regarding whether existing or planned infrastructure may support future service expansion.

EORN Cell Gap Project: Rogers

The Eastern Ontario Regional Network Cell Gap Project has resulted in new wireless infrastructure and improved cellular coverage in portions of North Kawartha.

As part of this project, Rogers has activated:

- A wireless site near Jack Lake, in the vicinity of Fire Route 52; and
- A wireless site near Rose Island, in the vicinity of Ingram Road and Chandos Lake-Wollaston Road.

Two additional sites are planned to be active in the Township this summer.

These sites have improved access to Rogers LTE and 5G wireless services in areas that were previously underserved. The new infrastructure represents a positive and tangible outcome from the EORN Cell Gap Project.

Improved wireless coverage supports residents, businesses, tourism operators, visitors, and people travelling or working throughout the Township. It can also enhance access to mobile communications in areas where fixed broadband options remain limited.



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While the new sites improve wireless coverage, geographic coverage is only one component of dependable wireless service. Network capacity, reliability, backup power, backhaul infrastructure, maintenance, and resiliency also influence whether customers can make calls, exchange text messages, and access data services when needed.

Staff recognize the positive contribution of the EORN Cell Gap Project and will continue to monitor the performance and coverage benefits associated with the newly activated Rogers sites.

Bell Wireless, Landline, and DSL Services

Staff continue to receive reports regarding reliability and performance issues affecting Bell wireless, landline telephone, and DSL services within North Kawartha.

Recent service outages

Over the past two months, multiple Bell service outages have affected wireless, landline telephone, and DSL services. These incidents have affected residents, businesses, visitors, and community organizations in different parts of the Township.

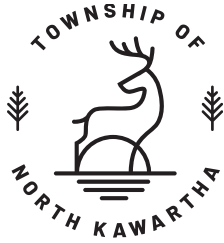
Depending on the nature and location of an outage, customers may lose one or more services, including:

- Wireless voice service;
- Wireless text messaging;
- LTE or 5G data service;
- Landline telephone service; and
- DSL internet service.

The effects of these outages extend beyond inconvenience. Local businesses increasingly depend on telecommunications services for debit and credit transactions, point-of-sale systems, online reservations, customer communications, email, cloud-based applications, security systems, remote work, and other operational requirements.

A service interruption can prevent a business from accepting electronic payments, responding to customers, accessing online systems, or completing routine transactions. The potential impact is particularly significant during the summer, when North Kawartha experiences increased seasonal population and tourism activity.

Service outages also create concerns for residents who rely on wireless or landline telephone services as their primary means of communication. During an outage,



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affected customers may have difficulty contacting family members, healthcare providers, businesses, government services, or emergency assistance.

The simultaneous loss of multiple Bell services is of particular concern where wireless, landline telephone, and DSL services depend on shared infrastructure or network connections. When several services are affected by the same incident, customers may have limited alternative communication options.

These outages demonstrate the importance of network resiliency and redundancy. Reliable service depends not only on the availability of telecommunications infrastructure, but also on appropriate backup systems, sufficient network diversity, timely maintenance, and the ability to restore service promptly following equipment failures, fibre cuts, power interruptions, or other incidents.

Seasonal wireless congestion

In addition to service outages, staff continue to receive reports of wireless congestion affecting Bell and Telus customers during peak summer periods. Bell and Telus use a shared Radio Access Network (RAN), meaning that customers of both providers may be affected by capacity limitations on the shared wireless infrastructure.

Reported issues include customers being unable to:

- Place or complete telephone calls;
- Send or receive text messages; and
- Access internet services through LTE or 5G connections.

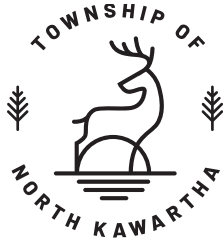
In some reported cases, a customer's device may display an available LTE or 5G connection, but voice, text, or data services may be unavailable or unreliable because of high network demand.

The reported congestion indicates that the presence of wireless coverage does not necessarily mean adequate service capacity is available. Network planning for rural and seasonal communities should consider peak demand rather than relying only on permanent population levels or average annual usage.

Importance of service resiliency

The combination of recent outages and seasonal congestion illustrates the need to consider service reliability, capacity, and resiliency alongside geographic coverage.

As more residents and businesses transition away from traditional landline services and become dependent on wireless communications, interruptions to cellular networks may



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affect a growing proportion of the community. At the same time, residents and businesses that continue to use Bell landline telephone, and DSL services remain dependent on aging copper-based infrastructure in many areas.

Staff will continue to document service concerns brought to the Township's attention and communicate these concerns through discussions with Bell, EORN, government relations representatives, and Ministry of Infrastructure staff.

Financial Implications: None

Strategic and/or Other Plans:

- North Kawartha Economic Development Strategic Plan (Infrastructure – 3.0 Internet & Cell Service)

In Consultation With: None

Attachment: None