



DATE: January 22nd 2021
TO: Huron North Community Economic Alliance Communities
FROM: HNCEA Board of Directors
SUBJECT: State of Broadband in HNCEA

HNCEA's goal with broadband was to act as a catalyst for improved broadband across our communities, and to increase engagement between communities and service providers.

The impact of COVID-19 and the transition to remote working, learning, healthcare, etc has indeed brought the issue of broadband to light. We're now living in a time where both provincial and federal governments recognize the importance of broadband for rural and remote areas and their funding programs now reflect our unique needs.

In the past year, we have seen incredible progress and have had several promising projects emerge:

Leapfrog Telecom

The CENGN Northern Ontario Residential Broadband Project #2 where Iron Bridge was paired with Leapfrog Telecom has completed and service is now available to residents of Iron Bridge. There are plans to expand the service to other parts of Huron Shores, including Bright Lake, Basswood Lake, Clear Lake, and Sowerby.

Leapfrog Telecom has applied to the Rapid Response Stream (RRS) of the Universal Broadband Fund on behalf of 8 HNCEA communities as well as two of our neighbors, SSM Ward 5 and Prince Township. They aim to bring their wireless internet solutions to successful applicant communities that do not have access to 50/10 broadband service. Eligibility for RRS requires these projects to be completed by November of 2021. Leapfrog also aims to submit applications to the Core Infrastructure fund on behalf of several HNCEA communities that did not qualify for the RRS.

Starlink "Better than Nothing" Beta Test

Residents across several HNCEA communities are now active on Starlink's Beta satellite service. The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) is in the process of assembling a focus group where residents can share and discuss their experiences with the service.

ROCK Networks

H&M COFI in partnership with ROCK Networks is applying to the Universal Broadband Stream's Core Infrastructure Fund as well as to ICON funding. They aim to build a fibre backbone through

HNCEA communities and out to Manitoulin Island. ROCK Networks responded to HNCEA's recent Expression of Interest and was selected as the successful vendor.

We were also informed that our activities have prompted other service providers to improve upon their offerings in the region and currently there are some initiatives underway. HNCEA will now transition to a supportive role for these initiatives. Our advisory committee will no longer need to meet regularly and instead will be consulted with on an as needed basis. In collaboration with SSMIC, we will continue to monitor the status of broadband across the region and will share updates as things progress.

Thank you to all who participated and advised us over the past eight months! We would not have seen such progress without you and the support of your communities.

Sincerely,

The HNCEA Team