

Birch Hills has a great opportunity to upgrade our internet infrastructure from the current old phone-line based DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) internet service to the newest generation of connectivity through Canadian Fiber Optics. This means that instead of town residents being able to receive, at best, the MINIMUM speeds for high-speed internet (50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload, as defined by the CRTC), we will have the ability to lead the entire country in connectivity speeds. While this may seem like it would just allow us to all run ultra-high-resolution Netflix, Disney+, and HBO Max streams to our TV's and download files off the internet faster, the reality is so much more.

The potential introduction of high-speed fiber to our community has already created interest in a couple innovative Saskatchewan technology companies; Krate Distributed Systems and VDQ-NRG. These businesses want to bring their services and benefits to our town, solely because we've shown the initiative to be progressive by embracing the connected future of innovation and technology.

Above attracting new companies and businesses to the town, increased connectivity means an easier time working and learning from home. As the pandemic has shown us, both of these activities are easy in theory but hard in practice, with one of the biggest bottlenecks being the sudden strain put on our internet connections.

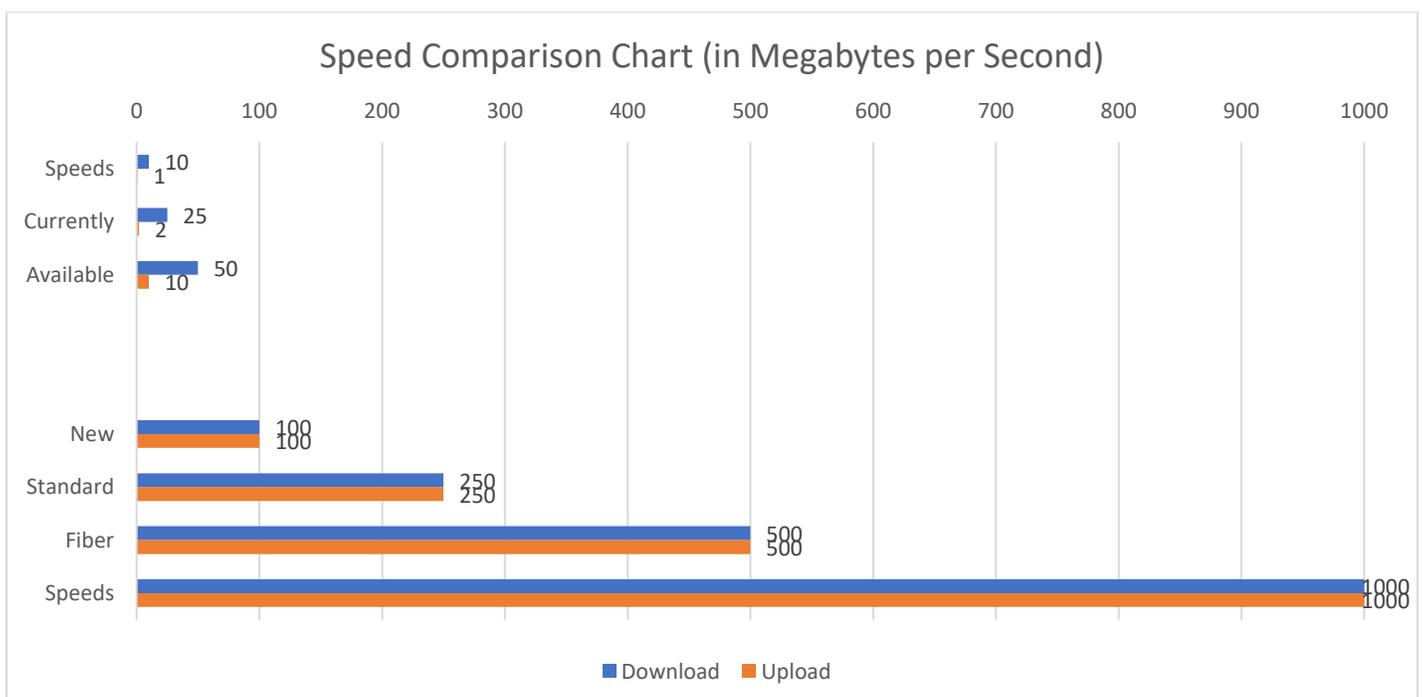
Most importantly, is having the town take advantage of the new rural migration that the pandemic has started. Families who are able to work from home are no longer tied to the cities that they work in, and what better place to live/work in that a small rural community that has the abundance of digital infrastructure available to not only let you work/learn without interruption, but actually be an IMPROVEMENT to what you may have had in the city. Being able to advertise the fact that Birch Hills has the first (or only) 1G/10G rural internet in the province will be a HUGE marketable benefit for the town.

For more information: <https://canadianfiberoptics.ca/>

Town Speed Survey: <https://canadianfiberoptics.ca/birchhills/>

Q: What speeds will be available?

A: All speeds are symmetrical (meaning the same speed for download AND upload) and will start at 100 Mbps and go to 1 Gbps. This means that download speeds could be 2x to 40x faster and upload speeds could be 10x to 500x faster. Speeds above 1 Gbps could be available as well, as Birch Hills could be the site of the first 10 Gbps (10000 Mbps) internet in the province. Below is a chart that illustrates the speed differences from what we have up to 1 Gbps (1000Mbps).



Q: Who are Canadian Fiber Optics?

A: Canadian Fiber Optics (also marketed as Northern Lights Fiber) is a Western Canada based company whose goal is to help rural Canadian communities create fast, reliable fiber internet networks. They believe that if rural Canada is going to survive, thrive, and compete economically, the people and businesses in these communities need fast, reliable internet networks. Canadian Fiber Optics funds, designs, builds, and operates fiber networks to get Canada connected faster, with fiber technology and fewer government dollars. They have successfully built fiber networks in a few dozen Alberta communities already, and are looking at Birch Hills for their first Saskatchewan build.

Q: What will it cost?

A: The monthly costs for fiber connectivity through Canadian Fiber Optics are competitive with other providers' monthly costs for fiber, where available. Final pricing will depend on how many customers sign up for the service, so it's cheaper for everyone when more of us sign up. As well, there is ZERO cost to the residents or the town for the construction costs associated with running the fiber infrastructure through the community.

Q: Can I still keep my SaskTel home phone, cell phone, security system, Max TV service, email, etc.?

A: Absolutely, each of these services is sold separately from SaskTel internet plans and can be bought and ran independent of which internet provider you use.

Q: If I have a problem, how long do I have to wait for support?

A: Like most internet providers, industry standard in-person support times are expected, with business connections receiving priority service. Although greater than two week wait times are sometimes experienced with current providers, standard Canadian Fiber Optics support will usually be much faster than that.

Q: My internet speeds are already good enough, why should I switch?

A: While the result of this will be an increase in internet speeds for everyone who signs up, the larger benefit is that this is a PERMANENT upgrade for the community. The truth is that our existing older infrastructure can't be upgraded anymore. Just like when the town moved from dial-up internet (anyone remember that?) to DSL, this improvement is necessary so that we can not only keep up with technology, but actually get ahead of it, and in the process attract new families, businesses and investments to the community.

Q: What if I'm currently in the middle of a contract with another provider?

A: Canadian Fiber Optics and the town are currently designing incentives to make transitioning mid-contract easier. The current penalty for cancelling service in the middle of a contract is around \$15 per month. The goal is to make sure that those households in a contract at the moment don't suffer any penalty, while providing other incentives for households not in a contract to move their service over to fiber.

Q: What's the catch?

A: The more households who sign up, the better this is for the town. If at least 60-65% of homes in town sign up, Canadian Fiber Optics will run fiber to EVERYONE'S house/lot, so that if you want to switch at a later date, you absolutely can, and it will give us the cheapest monthly costs. At numbers closer to 50%, fiber may only get ran to the houses who initially sign up, with possibly no option to move in the future for others. This means that it is incredibly important to sign up at the beginning, not only to guarantee that you receive the new service, but also to make sure that it's an option for ALL new homes and new families that come to town in the future.

Please help move our community forward by completing the quick survey here

<https://canadianfiberoptics.ca/birchhills/> and signing up for the service when it is hopefully launched later this year.