

Six Nations is getting connected...towers, broadband...

By Victoria Gray
Writer

With three active internet projects underway 100 per cent of Six Nations is expected to soon have access to the internet.

Six Nations will see Explornet, a SWIFT project and a new initiative funded by Rogers Communications Inc. all working towards 100 per cent of the community having access to 4G fibre internet connections.

Representatives from Rogers gave a presentation about their underground Fibre lines project at Six Nations Elected Council's (SNEC) general council meeting on March 23 to lay out their proposed plan.

Kim Barrington, Rogers director of Indigenous collaborations presented the company's proposed plan to help cover the territory completely with high speed fibre internet.

She said with SNEC's ap-

proval the project could be completed by the end of 2021, with a signed agreement from Elected Chief Mark Hill, who was absent



Kim Barrington

from the meeting.

"Our start time is dependant on approval from council. Once we have that we would kick off RFP process. We're ready when you're ready," she said.

SNEC received the presentation for information pending "cosmetic" changes to the principals of Rogers agreement with-

in the memorandum of understanding with SNEC.

Senior administrative officer Darrin Jamieson said council entered into a memorandum of understanding with Rogers in late January providing its support for the company and SNEC to co-apply for funding for the project from Canada's Universal Broadband fund.

Barrington said the company got nervous about the application's approval when stacked up against 6,000 other applications from across the country and decided to fund the project themselves to lay 130 kilometres of 4G fiber in areas not covered by Explornet, which amounts to about 2,000 homes.

After the RFP process to select a vendor is complete they will do a detailed site survey, which will give them a better understanding of a timeline, but Barrington said the project can only be com-

pleted in the warm weather months, so the sooner they get started the better.

"(Construction will be complete) by end of this year. Our plan is to take it into October and be finished before the cold weather comes back to us again," Barrington said.

They will connect to Rogers infrastructure in Caledonia and run a line along the east side of the community near Tom Longboat Corners, run down New Credit Road to Third Line and run west to Mohawk Road. Lines will extend from those lines to homes in the community. It will be an open source connection so other companies have access to it as well to give Six Nations residents choice when it comes to service providers.

Barrington said Rogers will run lines to every home within the 130 km stretch with the homeowner's permission and at no cost to the homeowner.

Barrington said throughout the project Rogers will subsidize the employment of a project manager for Six Nations, so Rogers has a point person to deal with and a go between for Explornet.

Rogers says it will also participate in community events to create awareness for the project if the pandemic allows, but if there are Zoom events they would also participate.

"We're hoping next season to host Hometown Hockey Fest at Six Nations," she said.

Rogers will also offer job opportunities within the community through a program with Six Nations Polytechnic.

Councillor Audrey Powell-Bomberry said she is excited about the new and improved internet options, but wondered about speed and cost.

"Your proposal looks pretty well thought out. It's what the reserve needs,

what we've asked for and what community members have been wanting for the last few years," she said.

Barrington said customers would be able to choose from all of the compliment of services offered on Rogers.com and she hoped to have an introductory or special rate for Six Nations to keep the service affordable for as many people as possible.

"As for speed, I know we are better... The technology we are looking to lay is the latest, it's scaleable and future proof, so you don't need to do any more work in the foreseeable future," she said.

Zac Carreiro, manager of media relations for Rogers said the cost of the project is not finalized because the project has not been tendered. More information will be available when construction begins.

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