

# Xplornet: North Halton one of the hardest areas in Canada to bring high-speed internet

*Region unsure of 2021 high-speed internet targets for rural Milton, Halton Hills*

**ALEXANDRA HECK**  
aheck@metroland.com

A Campbellville couple wanted to know why their Xplornet internet is painstakingly slow, despite purchasing one of the fastest packages.

Christine Prudham, vice-president of general counsel for the company explained to them that Milton is one of the most difficult areas in Canada for internet providers to service - because Bell and Rogers have licensed a wide swath of telecommunications frequencies in the Golden Horseshoe.

She and other service providers like Standard Broadband were available to answer questions of the public at a community meeting hosted by the Destination Campbellville Community Association at the Mohawk Racetrack.

"I need spectrum," said Prudham, explaining that she has pleaded with the Canadian Radio-

Television Communications (CRTC) for over a decade to make a concession with Xplornet.

The larger telecommunications companies purchased licensing for the 3,500-wavelength frequency in order to preserve their ability to service cellphone users in the area for years ahead. However, neither company has made motions to bring high-speed internet servicing to more rural parts of that territory.

"It's just brutal," said Prudham, adding that Xplornet focuses on bringing internet services to rural regions across the country, and as a result of the licensing agreement in the GTA, they bring faster internet to places like northern Alberta than inside the GTA.

As a result, the company services rural areas in the periphery of the Golden Horseshoe with alternative internet solutions, which Prudham explained are less ideal for the population density and landscape.



Alexandra Heck/Metroland

**Victoria Plourde and James Reyes from Connexions, a service installer for Xplornet came out to the community meeting at Mohawk Park to talk about efforts to expand high-speed internet servicing in North Halton.**

ty and landscape.

Xplornet isn't the only company struggling with bringing high-speed internet to the region.

A report from the Halton Region last year found that the majority of people living in the northern parts of Halton have subpar internet access.

The study was a partnership with BDO consulting LLP and the University of Guelph, where researchers surveyed 8,000 residences in the area about their internet access. Of the 1,500 respondents, all reported having internet speeds lower than the CRTC's minimum threshold for basic internet.

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In 2016, the CRTC declared internet a basic telecommunications service and announced that by 2021, 90 per cent of homes and businesses across the country should have internet with a downloading speed of at least 50 megabits per second.

"Given the lack of direct accountability to delivery services in the rural area of Halton, there is significant risk that the 2021 target for the delivery of basic internet will not be achieved," said the region's broadband update released this month.

Tom Williams, of Standard Broadband told the crowd at the meeting that his company is waiting for the snow to melt to begin installing a new network of fibre-optic cables to service the area.

"Unfortunately, it has taken us a little longer than we hoped," he said, explaining that they will be expanding services and burying cables all through the summer, until October or November. "We will be sending out more regular updates."



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