

Adequate Internet Service for Businesses in Lloydminster

2019

ISSUE:

In General, businesses in the city of Lloydminster do not have adequate Internet service or bandwidth available, especially compared to other cities in Alberta. There are areas of the city that have fiber business internet, but for the most part companies opt for the Telus DSL, SaskTel DSL or Shaw ADSL. These 3 solutions work ok, but they are best effort and primarily, consumer grade services. Some will market them as business packages, but they are really just consumer packages, marketed to business clients. In the North Industrial Park especially, businesses here have only one physical line option through Telus, or they subscribe to Wireless Internet providers. For a Business to have no choice but to subscribe to 10 year old service or rely on Wireless Internet within City limits is unacceptable in 2019.

BACKGROUND:

[DSL & ADSL Technology](#)

Areas of Lloydminster, especially the North end, have been neglected for any Internet infrastructure upgrades for years. In this area of the business community, there are only old Telus Copper lines that the maximum packages available are either 2.5Mbps Download and 0.5Mbps Upload, or 5Mbps Download and 1Mbps Upload. This is also limited to available ports that Telus may have available in the area to connect a business to. Shaw Cable has very limited install base north of the railway tracks. They do have some, but not very far north.

Most businesses downtown and south of Highway 16, have at least an option of either Telus or Shaw. On the Saskatchewan side of the city, SaskTel and Shaw. Shaw has upgraded their infrastructure for their ADSL service where they are present and can offer up to 600Mbps Download and 30Mbps Upload in prime locations. Most of this is targeted to their Consumer based clients so is more readily available to a Lloydminster business if they are located close to a residential area, or close to the primary traffic corridors. Telus has not invested in many upgrades to offer higher DSL packages. SaskTel DSL packages are somewhere in the middle of what is available from Shaw or Telus.

[Wireless High Speed Technology](#)

Another option for businesses that can not subscribe to adequate wired Internet is to go to a Wireless Internet solution. The Wireless Internet Service Provider (WISP), may be able to deliver a fairly high Download bandwidth, but the Upload bandwidth will be very low. Wireless technology also has a much higher latency of data traffic than traditional wired solutions. Finally, most WISPs will have data usage limits on their packages. Which means that once you go over your allotted data usage, they charge more money for every GB over. There are some WISPs that will have higher Upload and will offer unlimited data usage, but they are not the normal and they will charge extra for this type of service.

[Managed Business Fiber](#)

Fiber optics first came to Lloydminster via a federal mandate more than a decade ago to upgrade Canadian internet connections for Government, Health and Education. At that time the provinces were

tasked with putting their own spin on what they wanted that to look like. Alberta came up with Alberta SuperNet Project that was won by Bell Canada. Saskatchewan came up with CommunityNet which was done by SaskTel. With the provinces bringing in fiber services for this mandate, they were able to provide businesses with Managed Business Fiber and charged a premium for the installation as well as the monthly subscription service. The Managed Business Fiber is very reliable, extremely high speed and can have a guaranteed level of service. The problem is that this is quite expensive for the average small business.

Bell subcontracted the Alberta Fiber build to Axia who managed the SuperNet project through to completion and then they provided the ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure after the fact. 10 years have passed and now the cap on who can use the AB SuperNet has expired. Axia expanded their company and formed a new division that will provide fiber solutions to businesses and residents of Alberta. Axia installed their fiber build in Lloydminster for businesses a couple of years ago. Axia fiber service is breaking the Telus/Shaw mould of high priced business Internet services. They drastically reduced installation costs while giving monthly subscription fees about the same as traditional DSL packages. In 2018, Bell Canada bought Axia and promptly dissolved the company. The service is still running in Lloydminster, at this time it is unknown what the plans are, if any, to expand the service.

As a result of lower cost fiber solutions, you can now find a SaskTel Business / residential fiber solution (InfiNet) that is available in limited places in Lloydminster and a new Telus Business Fiber solution being built out. Both companies have dropped installation fees to much more reasonable prices, but the service is only available in limited areas. They have also dropped monthly fees to be close to their DSL packages, but they have offset their fiber packages to be lower Upload than Download. Historically, Business fiber packages are symmetrical. (same upload as download)

Because of the traditionally high costs of a fiber solution, most Lloydminster businesses can't afford it. The companies who do have it, are probably large, businesses with multiple office locations that needed to tie computers together. (Husky, CNRL, etc) Bigger cities have had lower fiber costs for quite a while now while Lloydminster has not.

SaskTel does have some residential Fiber available here, they brand it as InfiNet. Click [HERE](#) for a link to their coverage map.

Telus has begun their infrastructure fiber build in Lloydminster in 2018. The difference with this Fiber Optic Build from their current business fiber, is that it is different technology. This Fiber Build is much lower cost so it is competitive with higher bandwidth packages of Shaw ADSL.

Why Does Bandwidth Matter?

For a business to operate in 2019 and the future, there is an increased push to do more and more on Internet, Cloud based solutions. Many software companies are pushing their clients to the Cloud versions of their software. While there are many advantages to doing so, for a Lloydminster Business that does not have adequate bandwidth available to them, it means they can be left behind their competitors. Even a small business with a computer to do their Accounting and Bookkeeping, if they do not have access to adequate Internet Bandwidth they can be forced into using more expensive, less functional software than their competition using Cloud based solutions. The Internet service options available to a business need to have equally adequate Upload bandwidth as Download. This is the downfall of the ADSL and DSL technologies, the Upload is usually 10 times less than the Download. For

our business community to successfully make the transition to Cloud based solutions in the near future, we need to entice our Internet providers to bring affordable, higher bandwidth packages for both Upload and Download traffic.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Lloydminster Chamber of Commerce recommends that the City take a more active role in advocating for its business community with the Internet Service Providers (ISP). Lloydminster businesses need the ISPs to provide their services everywhere within the city, not just in specific locations. Understanding that a fiber optic build can not happen overnight, but our business community has been fighting with the main ISPs here for years and we are still suffering from inadequate Internet service in a majority of the community.

We suggest a committee of business representatives who are interested in advocating for our business community and a representative from the City of Lloydminster undertake the task of engaging the ISPs in Lloydminster to implement their business fiber services to the entire business community. By working together to achieve a commitment from the ISPs to deliver their services sooner than later, we will have a stronger voice than each business contacting them separately. We will be offering the ISPs a city of business clients all at once, instead of each individual business separately.