



Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee:

Proposed Broadband Development & Investment Framework

The Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee

The Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee (SBAC) is a cross-sector and community-based group of provincial, local, and Indigenous organizations, and networks. The Committee was established in February 2021 in response to the exacerbated broadband issues experienced across the province due to COVID-19.

Formed through a shared and collective concern over the issues and lost opportunities for all citizens related to broadband connectivity across the province. Our key focus is to assist with addressing long-standing issues affecting broadband connectivity; and advise and direct actions leading to a shared strategy, investment, and vision.

The Committee has identified four key building blocks.

1. **Improved Regional and Indigenous Collaboration and Stakeholder Partnerships**
2. **Enhanced Awareness, Local Capacity and Digital Competency**
3. **Strengthened Industry Partnerships and Market Development**
4. **Elevated Community Access and Infrastructure Development**

The Need for Change

Lowest Investment Per Capita

Since 2015, Saskatchewan continues to receive the lowest per capita investment from the Federal Government.

Persistent Digital Divide

The recent Federal Auditor's Report further highlighted Saskatchewan's lagging position in terms of services for "rural and remote communities and First Nations". The Auditor General's report noted "the persistent digital divide for people living on First Nations and in rural and remote communities".

Below National Standards

At the local provincial level, SBAC's 2022 Saskatchewan Broadband Survey, 53% of respondents indicated they ARE NOT or DO NOT have access to broadband 50/10 high-speed internet.

NO Provincial Plan

To the best of our knowledge, Saskatchewan is currently the only province without a formal provincial plan or strategy related to improving broadband infrastructure.

The Need for Rural Connectivity

A large portion of the Saskatchewan population lives in rural areas, where there are more connectivity concerns.

CROSS-CANADA COMPARISON

Prov.	Plan	Goals	Funding/Outcomes
SK	No	In 2024, SaskTel announced, we will connect 10,000 homes and reach 85% connectivity across the province over the next 3-4 years.	\$440 million investment in SaskTel from the Universal Broadband Fund. \$80 million dollar investment from SaskTel.
AB	Yes (since 2022)	Connect 200,000 households across Alberta. Reach 100% connectivity across the province by the end of 2026-2027 fiscal year.	\$780 million from Federal and Provincial governments. \$36 million for the Alberta Broadband Fund.
BC	Yes (since 2017)	To help internet service providers and regional and local governments connect people in rural and Indigenous communities with high-speed internet to reach 100% connectivity across the province.	Since 2015, the Government of Canada has invested nearly \$1.1 billion in connectivity projects in British Columbia. In 2022, Canada and British Columbia announced an additional \$830 million to invest.
MAN	Yes	Connect over 125,000 Manitobans . As of 2024, only 85% of the province is connected to high-speed internet.	\$260 million from the Canada Infrastructure Bank, Valley Fiber Ltd., and DIF Capital Partners. \$38 million from the Universal Broadband Fund
ONT	Yes	Connect 700,000 unserved or underserved homes by the end of 2025.	\$150 million from Ontario for broadband and cellular access \$900 million for cellular, broadband, and satellite projects
QB	Yes	Provide 100% of households with 50/10 by 2022	Quebec government and ISPs have invested \$826.3 million .

Despite the significant investment and efforts in broadband infrastructure from SaskTel, Saskatchewan still falls short in comparison to other provinces in Canada. Over the next 3-4 years, Saskatchewan will only reach 85% connectivity, which most other provinces have already achieved.

Calls to Action

In response to Saskatchewan's 'digital divide', the Saskatchewan Broadband Action Committee (SBAC) is asking the Provincial Government to adopt the Broadband Development & Investment Framework. It is our hope, through the following proposed calls to action, the Committee, the Province and the Federal Government can work together in the development of a Provincial Broadband Plan and Strategy.

- 1. Public endorsement of the SBAC Broadband Development & Investment Framework.**
- 2. Formation of an Industry Collaboration Table / Industry Stakeholder Group, specifically focused on the 'last mile.'**
- 3. Development of a Terms of Reference / Collaboration Protocol Agreement.**
- 4. Community grant funding to assist with capacity and regional planning for First Nations and Municipalities.**
- 5. With respect to Federal Broadband Infrastructure funding, SBAC recommends the following directives:**
 - The Federal Government get beyond funding based on percentage of population; and,
 - Immediately begin to action the release of the ISED \$37M Investment in Saskatchewan Broadband for local ISPs to continue with vital investment in broadband infrastructure.

For a copy of the Investment Framework or to learn more about the committee, please visit:
<https://sarm.ca/saskatchewan-broadband-action-committee/>