

Residents band together to bring Internet to Laskay

By Rob Valenzano

After facing the pains of slow speed and high overage rates, the community of Laskay pulled together to solve their own internet issues.

The story began two years ago when Dennis and Tracy Price were perplexed with the internet speed and the rates they were paying on data overage. This isn't an abnormal occurrence, considering you can look at some of these [top internet statistics](#) and find out that many people actually end up overpaying for the connectivity and the speeds they receive. They remember wondering if their neighbours had better options available to them, so they started knocking on doors and starting a discussion with neighbours on their street only. Everyone had internet in the neighbourhood, which consists of only 15 homes, but it was very slow and costly. The options ranged from the relatively limited local carriers and Xplornet to costly turbo hubs offered by either Rogers or Bell. Every resident was faced with the same situation: very slow internet, limited data and or very high monthly costs. The Prices wondered if it was just their small neighbourhood that struggled with this issue? As they expanded their door knocking to the other streets, the story never changed.

In total, there are 77 homes in the entire Laskay community, and most were affected. With few exceptions, everyone was frustrated and had no where to turn.

Well, fortunately for Laskay, that did not stop Dennis and Tracy. They made calls to every internet supplier in the country to see if they were interested in bringing high-speed internet to our small community. A few were interested, but not really. It was going to be a costly undertaking with a long turn-around for profit. We all remember the first meeting in the Prices' home with 1 small supplier and 20 interested neighbours to hear what they had to say. This was the first step to farming the options and planting seeds of hope. Since the cost was steep to set up (in excess of \$100,000), they decided to get the Township involved to see if there were any programs that could help fund this endeavour.

As they canvassed the area, they started to hear the stories of frustration, exorbitant costs incurred, and tensions created within the family. One neighbour was unfortunately affected with the sale of their home. A deal fell through because the community did not have high-speed internet.

The reality hit of just how important and relevant high-speed internet was to daily life. Some families experienced overage costs in excess of \$600/month.

Even though this was not the Prices' situation, they felt that the community needed to come together to bring the town of Laskay to the 20th century. They continued to take the lead and decided to share the stories of the Laskay residents with King's Mayor Steve Pellegrini and Councillor David Boyd. They really began to get traction with their initiative once the mayor was on board. It began to give a voice to the "small homeowner," especially when dealing with the Goliath internet players.

Dennis and Tracy were the town advocates for Laskay, whether it was via phone, email or an old school knock on the door; they began corralling the residents to the new town hall and having meetings with the mayor, councillors and internet providers.

Dennis and Tracy could no longer carry the task on their own. Fellow neighbours, Peter Kelly and Rob Valenzano decided it was time to step in and help the Prices' with the carrying out this endeavour. They called upon other active neighbours to join in and the Laskay Fibre Internet Committee was created with the following members: Dennis, Peter, Greg, Sebastian, Brian and Rob.

How did it all pan-out for the Laskay residents? Well, this modern-day fairy tale has a happy ending. We won't give you all the trials and tribulations along the way. It took a concerted effort to get a significant number of residents (61 out of 77) to commit to signing up for high-speed and a minimum financial commitment for infrastructure of \$90,000. This amount was eventually reduced to \$75,000 paid to Bell Canada in order to lay the fibre internet cable in the community. Sommerville, a local provider landed the contract from Bell.

The committee team would like to thank the following key people:

Bell Canada; Jim, project manager at Bell Canada; Christine, customer service and satisfaction, Mayor Steve Pellegrini and his team; Councillor David Boyd and Sommerville staff.