

Council has officially approved the Clearwater County Broadband project to move forward. Grants are confirmed, construction is underway, and more than 675 residents have already signed up. Here’s what you need to know - and what to do next.

PROJECT APPROVED TO MOVE FORWARD

On February 13, 2026, the Clearwater County Broadband Committee formally approved the County’s broadband project to proceed, a major milestone following more than two decades of planning, community engagement, and feasibility work.

After a thorough review of costs, risks, and funding, Council voted to continue the project. Here’s how Reeve Northcott put it:

“This Council is now in a position where previous grant agreements and contractual obligations have created financial commitments. Our responsibility today is to manage those commitments prudently, ensure strong oversight, and deliver infrastructure that is reliable, sustainable, and financially responsible. Our focus now is on protecting the County’s long-term interests and making sure this investment is delivered successfully.”

— Reeve Jordon Northcott

The decision followed confirmation of additional funding support from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and the Government of Alberta, announced January 30, 2026, by the Honourable Buckley Belanger, Secretary of State for Rural Development, and the Honourable Nate Glubish, Minister of Technology and Innovation of Alberta. This project is the result of consistent advocacy by residents and businesses across the county, and it is being delivered with strong fiscal oversight.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

The broadband project is one of the largest infrastructure investments in Clearwater County’s history, and most of the cost is being covered by grants (not local taxpayers.)

Here are the key numbers:

\$140M	\$88M	\$52M
Total Project Cost	Covered by Grants (63%)	County’s Net Share

The grants come from the federal government and the Province of Alberta, money that was awarded to Clearwater County through a competitive application process. If we hadn’t applied and won, these dollars would have gone somewhere else outside of our county. Clearwater County’s tax base is **90% industrial** (oil, gas, and forestry companies) and only **10% residential**. That means the majority of the County’s share falls on industry, not homeowners.

As more residents connect to the network, it will generate its own revenue. The goal is for the network to fully cover its own operating costs by 2029–2030, and any surplus after that will

be reinvested into Clearwater County to support community programs and local services.

The full financial review is available in the Broadband Committee meeting agenda available at www.clearwatercounty.civicweb.net/Portal/. A summary will be coming soon to the Clearwater County website.

HOW THE NETWORK WORKS

It's important to understand that the County does not sell internet service directly to residents. Clearwater County owns and operates the fibre cables, the infrastructure. Think of it like a road: the County builds and maintains the road, but private companies (ISPs) use it to deliver services to you.

This is called an **open access network**. It means you'll have choices, just like having more than one gas station in town:

- The County is building with fibre - the gold standard in internet technology, designed to serve the community for generations to come
- Multiple Internet Service Providers (ISPs) can offer service over the same network
- No single telecom company has a monopoly - competition keeps prices fair
- The County retains full ownership and control - 100% locally owned, no foreign ownership
- Residents will be able to compare providers and choose the plan that works best for them

The County is currently finalizing service agreements with interested ISPs. Once those agreements are in place, providers will be able to begin advertising their plans and pricing to residents in their service areas. We'll share that information as soon as it's available (Spring 2026).

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The network is actively being built across the county. Construction is phased, meaning fibre cables reach different areas at different times. Some neighbourhoods and rural routes will become service-ready before others, depending on where contractors are working.

Here's where things stand today:

- 4,300+ households will be served when the project is complete
- More than 675 residents have already signed up for the Fibre Connect program (ahead of forecast)
- Phased service rollout begins late Spring 2026, with some areas coming online first
- Full construction anticipated to be completed by March 31, 2027

We know waiting is frustrating - especially when you can see work happening nearby but your area isn't connected yet. The construction schedule is set by geography, contractor availability, and grant boundaries. We will keep you updated as each area comes online. Watch for updates at www.clearwatercounty.ca and through this regular newsletter.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NEXT?

Here's a simple step-by-step guide to getting connected and knowing what to expect along the way.

1 Check if Your Address is in the Build Area

Visit market.cwcbb.ca and enter your property address (blue sign address). The map will show whether your property falls within the current build area. If you're not in the current build area, you can still register your interest for future phases by completing a survey.

2 Sign Up for Fibre Connect (Optional)

If your address is in the build area and you'd like the fibre cable brought to your property, sign up for the Fibre Connect program at market.cwcbb.ca. This is completely optional, signing up for Fibre Connect does not commit you to purchasing internet service from any provider. Signing up now saves you money: **Early bird rate: \$399 for the first 100m** (+ \$14/m beyond 100m), plus GST. The standard rate after construction is \$1,500, plus GST for the first 100m.

3 AFL Will Visit Your Property

After you sign up, AFL (the County's installation contractor) will contact you to schedule a site visit. During this visit, they will:

- 1.) Complete an *Access and Entry Agreement* with you
- 2.) Confirm the exact route the fibre cable will take from the road to your home or business
- 3.) Provide you with the final estimated cost of your Fibre Connect installation based on the actual distance

4 Wait for ISP Agreements to be Finalized

The County is currently working with several interested Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to finalize their service agreements. Once those agreements are in place, ISPs will be able to officially advertise their plans, speeds, and pricing to residents in their service areas. We do not have the ISP pricing or product details yet, but we will communicate as soon as providers are ready to go to market, and you will be able to shop online at market.cwcbb.ca from all available providers.

5 Choose Your Internet Provider

Once ISPs are active on the network in your area, you'll be able to compare their offerings and choose the plan that works best for you, all from the same fibre network running to your property. You are under no obligation to subscribe to any service simply because your property is connected to the fibre network.

Ready to Check Your Address?

See if your property is in the build area and sign up for Fibre Connect by visiting:

market.cwcbb.ca

STAY CONNECTED & GET UPDATES

We'll continue to share updates as construction progresses and ISPs come online. Here's how to stay informed:

1. Visit market.cwcbb.ca
2. Subscribe to the e-newsletter
3. Follow on social media
4. Contact us directly at 403-845-4444