



Welcome to the Digital Future

of Northwestern Alberta

Local municipal councils in Northwestern Alberta have been advocating for telecommunications infrastructure improvements for many years. Since 2017, the Regional Economic Development Alliance (REDI) has launched studies and actively pursued internet infrastructure investment as well. As a result, massive improvements are now underway.

“We are very pleased to announce that communities in the REDI Region are finally getting the upgrades necessary to help close this digital divide,” said Peter Braun, Mackenzie County

Councillor and former REDI Board Member.

“There is now funding and a plan in place to have internet speeds necessary to ensure reliable access to the digital world, for some by as early as this year.”

The government’s plan is to have medium-to-high speed internet in every business and household in the REDI Region—as well as in all of Alberta—by the end of 2026-2027 fiscal year.

“Our voices have been heard. This huge initiative is made possible by provincial and federal joint funding,” said Braun. “Soon, many of us will get lightning-fast internet

speeds just like people in urban communities.”

Currently, Telus is replacing copper wire with fiber optic cable in High Level, Fort Vermilion and La Crete for high-speed internet.

Paddle Prairie is getting significant broadband infrastructure upgrades with other internet service providers. Rainbow Lake deployed its own highspeed infrastructure in early 2023 with the Connect to Innovate Grant.

“The improvement to broadband access and fibre is an important step for our settlement members as the need for connectivity is such an important step towards long term sustainability in

the modern age,” said Justin Gaudet, CAO of Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement.

Access to fast, reliable internet gives business owners in the REDI Region new opportunities to grow and diversify. Some businesses may start selling to international markets, and local consumers will likely find it easier to buy local online.

“This will have a huge impact on our local economy,” said Matthew Luengo, High Level Chamber of Commerce and REDI board member. “We’ll start to see improvements everywhere from our agriculture sector to our access to healthcare and education sectors.”



Provincially, the Alberta Broadband Strategy predicts a boost in the agricultural sector by up to 5% through increased productivity and application of AgTech—a catch-all term for agricultural technology that streamlines and automates farming processes to improve efficiency, yields and sustainability.

For residents not in the communities currently receiving upgrades, Starlink, a satellite internet company, is available to provide high-speed rural internet access.

“Locally, most of our farmers don’t get a strong internet signal in the fields,” said Andrew O’Rourke manager of REDI. “Now there are options like the Starlink satellite system, which has 100 megabytes-per-second downloading. With options like livestock and crop monitoring, and drone farming, this could revolutionize how our farmers operate.”

Once the infrastructure is in place, local access to online education will improve. Fort Vermilion School Division, Northland School Division,

which operates a school in Paddle Prairie, and Northern Lakes College will be able to upgrade what they offer students online.

When it comes to healthcare, access to high-speed internet is expected to improve communication and access to information as well as to reduce travel time and its associated costs. Home health monitoring and better access to mental health care services are expected to reduce costs and hospital stay times.

Telus contractors are currently drilling into businesses and homes, digging trenches across lawns to install fibre optic cable. People in High Level, Fort Vermilion and La Crete can expect the option to connect to the new network later this fall.

“This is going to profoundly change life in High Level for the better, and it cements our community’s reputation as the hub for healthcare, government, industry and commerce in Northwestern Alberta,” said High Level Mayor and REDI Board Member Crystal McAteer.

WHAT IS REDI?

The Regional Economic Development Initiative Association for Northwest Alberta (REDI) formed in 2002. It exists to promote and enhance economic growth amongst its member communities and to promote the region as a whole, rather than as individual communities.

REDI is geographically located in the far northwest portion of Alberta and is located within Mackenzie County and the Métis settlement of Paddle Prairie.

The region is home to a number of progressive and established resource industries such as agriculture, forestry and oil and gas. This vibrancy has enabled sustained economic diversification. Cenovus Energy, Richardson Pioneer, West Fraser and Tolko Industries have all made major investments in the REDI region.

Like the northern lights that dance overhead, the REDI region is vibrant and alive. The region is filled with unique commercial, residential and industrial investment opportunities. This, together with a high regard for family and lifestyle, make the region an amazing place to work and live.

The REDI region has a population of more than 25,000 residents. The main source of revenue for REDI comes from annual municipal membership fees and government partner funding. REDI is registered as a society under The Societies Act of Alberta.