



## Request for Decision

Regular Council Meeting

February 17, 2026

Report prepared by: Cory Adamson, GM of Corporate and Financial Services

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### Broadband Report for Carseland and Speargrass

#### Recommendation from Administration

THAT Council Accepts the Broadband Report for Carseland and Speargrass as information.

#### Chief Administrative Officer's Comments

N/A

#### Report

Division 3

#### Background:

In response to increasing interest in residential fibre internet services within the Carseland and Speargrass communities, Administration has been exploring available service options to help understand feasibility.

Administration has contacted major telecommunications providers (including Rogers and TELUS) to request updates on potential fibre-to-the-home broadband expansion in these areas. Based on information received, Carseland and Speargrass appear to not currently meet the private-sector investment thresholds required for fibre-to-the-home deployment and Rogers hasn't responded to roadmap inquiries.

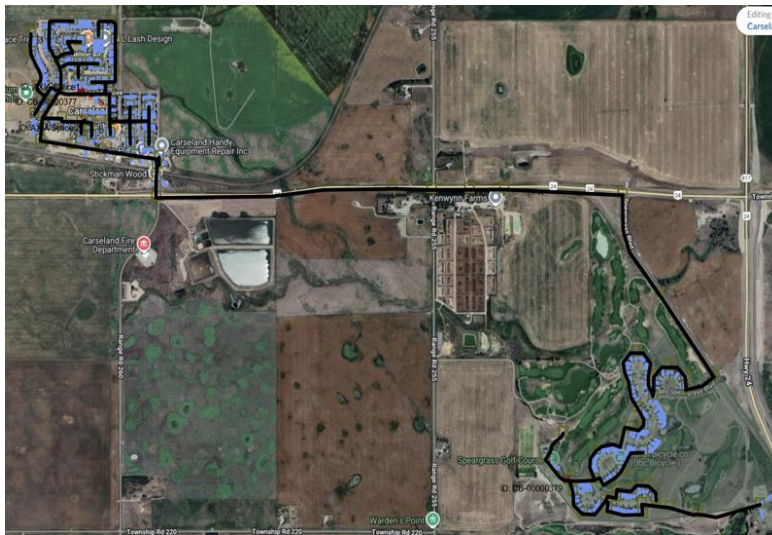
For the County to pursue fibre services independently of large communications providers, there must be reasonable access to fibre interconnection points and suitable capacity that supports public internet services. As a result, only certain communities within the County may be technically viable, even where private fibre or trunk lines exist nearby.

Based on preliminary research, it is possible that a fibre-fed internet access point exists in Carseland that could support local service delivery, with a relatively short extension potentially enabling connectivity to Speargrass. Administration has received preliminary cost estimates to support an initial assessment of feasibility.

#### High Level Costing and Financial Considerations:

At a high level, preliminary estimates indicate capital costs in the range of **\$8,000 to \$9,000 per household** or approximately **\$3,000,000** to install fibre service to both communities. This would include fiber to the premise at Carseland and Speargrass, the backhaul (transmission line) to Speargrass, and the network design and equipment etc.

Figure 1: Potential Network Map



Depending on a subscriber uptake, it may take **longer than five (5) years** for operations to become cost-neutral. This estimate does not include reserve contributions required to support long-term asset lifecycle management (e.g., future replacement of network equipment and infrastructure).

During the initial years of operation, high level estimates indicate an annual operating **deficit** between **\$122,000** and **\$16,000** per year, until sufficient subscriptions are achieved. If the service reaches a surplus position, those funds would be required to be allocated to a reserve to support future asset replacement and lifecycle costs.

#### **Current Service Availability:**

Carseland and Speargrass currently have access to the following high speed broadband services. Posted speeds are provider-advertised as of January 26, 2026, however actual cost or performance may vary at the time of this report.

##### **Example Fixed Wireless / 5G Home Internet**

- **Rogers:** Up to **500 Mbps download / 30 Mbps upload** – approximately **\$100/month**
- **Xplore:** Up to **500 Mbps download / 50 Mbps upload** – approximately **\$120/month**

##### **Example Satellite**

- **Starlink:** Up to **400+ Mbps download / 20–40 Mbps upload** – approximately **\$140/month**

The Government of Canada [National Broadband Map](#) identifies areas with available service types and providers, including mobile, fixed wireless/5G, and satellite services. Providers shown include Bell, Rogers, TELUS, ABNet, Xplore, and Rigstar Communications.

While the map indicates fibre-to-the-home availability in Carseland, Administration has been advised by Rogers/Shaw that Carseland does not currently have fibre-to-the-home service, and that 5G fixed wireless internet is available instead.

Administration notes that Starlink is not currently reflected on the National Broadband Map; however, it is available within these areas. [Starlink | Availability Map](#) & [Starlink | Residential](#)

#### **Upcoming Changes to Other Wheatland County Communities:**

Through partnership with Alberta, Canada, and Internet providers, funding for 2025-2027 initiatives have positive affect within Wheatland County Communities noted here: [Alberta Rural Broadband Deployment \(2025-2026\) - Alberta Major Projects](#). TELUS also had announced a \$19 billion dollar investment in Alberta over 2023-2027; however as stated earlier, those communities may not qualify for fiber-to-the-home projects.

**Fixed Wireless (minimum 50+/10+ mbps):**

Lyalta, Nightengale, Dalum, Chancellor, Cheadle, Redland, Rosebud - (Xplore), December 2026

Rosebud, Redland - (Switch Inc.), March 2027

A full list can be viewed here: [Governments of Canada and Alberta to help bring high-speed Internet access to communities across the province - Canada.ca](#)

**Funding:**

As the private sector has indicated, the return on investment may not be appetising. This means that other factors must be considered when thinking of the investment. Some options below could be considered.

**Local Improvement Tax**

Administration may explore a local improvement tax model, subject to Council direction, including the feasibility of defining the benefiting area, estimated costs per participating property, and anticipated term/repayment structure.

**Cost Sharing Agreement**

Benefactors of the service could provide up-front cost sharing to connect.

**Grants**

During the Wheatland County broadband project, which prioritized industrial growth and attraction, Administration evaluated potential federal and provincial grant programs. It was determined that while Speargrass and Carseland were underserved at the time (with speeds of 25/5 Mbps), they fell outside the immediate scope, which was focused on the West Hwy #1 and Goldfinch industrial areas. Since then, Xplore has applied for and received funding to deliver fixed wireless services with minimum speeds of 50/10 to a broader region that includes these communities. Consequently, it is highly likely that future broadband funding initiatives would no longer classify Speargrass and Carseland as underserved, potentially impacting eligibility for broadband grants for fiber infrastructure.

**Conclusion:**

Administration has attached the County's former "2022 Broadband Strategic Plan" draft (prepared by consultants) to this report, which included information derived from surveys done in early 2021. Some of this information can also be found on our website at <https://wheatlandcounty.ca/broadband-project>. One of the key takeaways from the survey and report, was that reliability was a greater concern over bandwidth (speed). Wireless technologies are more susceptible to environmental conditions than fiber. Currently, the technology landscape and available speeds have increased in many areas since this document was drafted but does give some insight into former residential and non-residential interest.

While a lot to consider, some work could be done further to explore the viability and interest of this service if Council wishes to proceed further than this report. The following steps could be undertaken.

1. Conduct a local interest survey to determine expected uptake (e.g., online survey and/or direct outreach).
2. If sufficient interest is identified, prepare a draft implementation and funding plan, and community information sessions including funding models such as a local improvement tax (estimated monthly costs, term, and participation requirements).
3. If viable, approve an approach and preform an RFP.

**Relevant Policies, Practices, and Legislation**

N/A

**Alignment with the Strategic Plan**

N/A

### **Response Options**

Option 1: THAT Council direct Administration to conduct a local interest survey regarding fiber-to-the-home services and potential funding models in the communities of Carseland and Speargrass, and return to Council with a report outlining the results.

Option 2: THAT the proposed recommendation is not accepted/approved.

Option 3: THAT an alternate recommendation is accepted/approved.

### **Implications of Recommendation**

#### **General**

N/A

#### **Organizational**

N/A

#### **Financial**

N/A

#### **Environmental, Staff, and Public Safety**

N/A

### **Follow-up Action / Communications**

N/A

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2026-02-17 Broadband Report for Speargrass and Carseland.docx
Attachments:	- Wheatland County Rural Broadband Strategic Plan v3.1.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Feb 9, 2026

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherry Baers". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sherry Baers