Chapter 6
SaskTel—Making High-Speed Internet Available Throughout Saskatchewan

1.0 Main Points

High-speed internet is a necessity in a modern economy—supporting peoples' ability to communicate, work, learn, and access government services. In 2019, the Federal Government set a target for 100% of Canadians—including those living in First Nations, rural, and remote communities—to have access to high-speed internet by 2030. In Saskatchewan, internet service providers, including SaskTel, have been expanding available technologies to increase access to high-speed internet in support of this target.

SaskTel prioritized fibre as its primary high-speed internet technology, with its fibre network expected to cost $1.4 billion once complete. At December 2025, SaskTel had spent over $1 billion on building its fibre network.

At March 2025, SaskTel reported 77% of Saskatchewan households had access to its fibre network, with targets of 82% by March 2026, and about 90% by the federal 2030 deadline. It expects the remaining 10% of households will be served by other internet service providers (e.g., satellite providers).

We audited SaskTel's processes for making high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan and found it had effective processes, except SaskTel needs to:

- **Report on the reliability of its high-speed internet by determining and using performance targets.**

  We found SaskTel uses IT tools to detect and resolve capacity issues, outages, or service disruptions. SaskTel reported eight major service outages in 2025, compared to one in 2024. Setting clear reliability targets for high-speed internet would help SaskTel monitor how quickly outages are resolved and better report results to senior management and the public.

- **Assess its initiatives used for making high-speed internet affordable to low-income households.**

  While we found SaskTel takes part in a Federal Government program that offers discounted high-speed internet for lower-income customers, it did not sufficiently evaluate whether affordability strategies it uses adequately support the Government in helping low-income households across Saskatchewan access affordable high-speed internet.

As a Crown corporation, SaskTel must consider financial and social responsibilities when making quality and affordable high-speed internet available throughout the province. Having high-speed internet available helps support the people in Saskatchewan with daily life, work, and access to essential services.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

High-speed internet is considered a necessity in Canada for daily life (e.g., education, applying for government services), economic participation (e.g., applying for jobs), and access to essential services (e.g., telehealth)—much like electricity or phone service in previous eras. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the regulator of Canada's broadcasting and telecommunications sectors, declared broadband internet access a basic service (i.e., necessity) in December 2016.[1,2]

In order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by today's internet, high download and upload speeds are necessary—the Federal Government has defined this to be a minimum capacity to download at 50 megabits per second (Mbps) and to upload at 10 Mbps (50 Mbps/10 Mbps speeds).[3,4] **Figure 1** provides a summary of common speed tiers and what can be done at each tier.

Figure 1—Different Internet Speed Tiers and Associated Capabilities

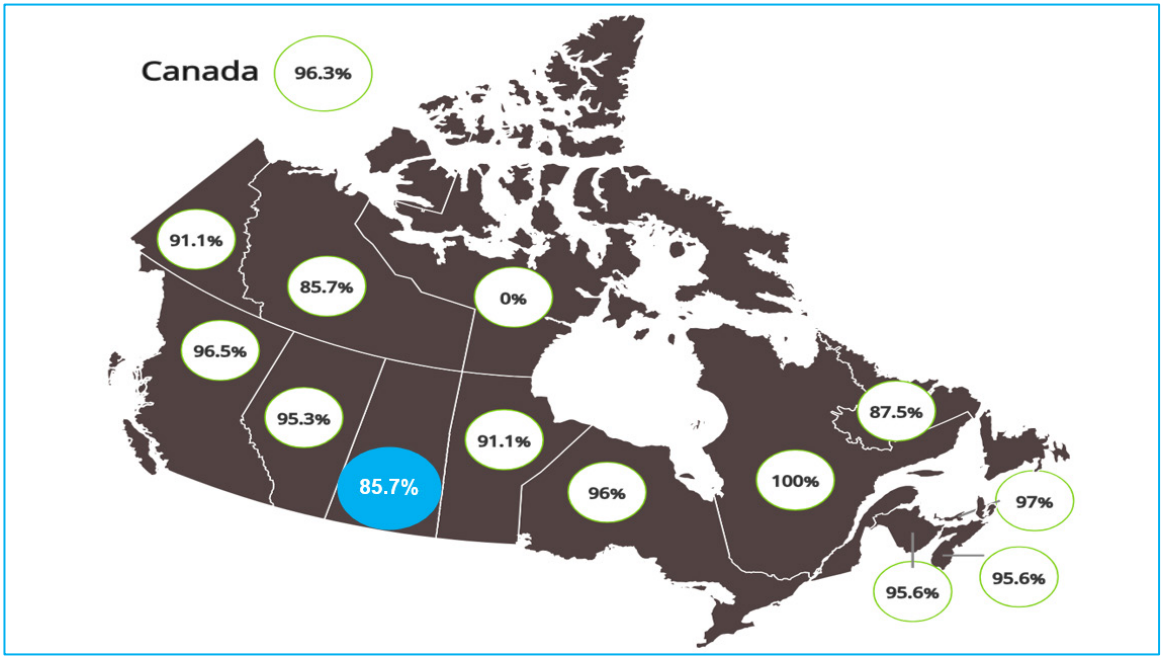
Speed Tier[A]	Download and Upload Capabilities
10–15 Mbps (or less)	Basic web browsing, email, standard-definition video streaming, light video calls Very limited for things like large file uploads or many users
16–40 Mbps	High Definition (HD) video streaming, more reliable video calls, working from home (with moderate cloud use), downloading moderate-size files
41–100 Mbps	Multiple users can stream HD/4K video, video conference, download large files fairly quickly, play online games[B]
100–250 Mbps	For families or shared households: smooth 4K streaming, cloud backup, large file downloads, more devices working simultaneously[B]
250–500 Mbps	For power users: content creators uploading video, intense gaming, smart homes, multiple high-demand users, very fast large file transfers
500 Mbps–1 Gbps	Ideal for very large households, 4K/8K media streaming, professional work (e.g., video editing in the cloud), multiple simultaneous high-bandwidth activities[B]

Source: Adapted from broadbandnow.com/guides/how-much-internet-speed-do-i-need (8 April 2026).
[A] Mbps is megabits per second and Gbps is gigabits per second.
[B] 4K and 8K are ultra-high-definition resolutions for displaying sharp, high-quality images and video.

Canada's Connectivity Strategy, released in 2019 by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), committed to ensuring all Canadians have access to high-speed internet at speeds of at least 50 Mbps/10 Mbps.[5] As of November 2025, ISED reports 85.7% of Saskatchewan households have access to services that meet or exceed the 50 Mbps/10 Mbps speed internet benchmark based on information provided by some internet providers including SaskTel, compared to 96.3% of Canadians overall (see **Figure 2**).

[1] www.cbc.ca/news/politics/crtc-internet-essential-service-1.3906664 (6 March 2026).
[2] The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is an independent administrative tribunal that regulates and supervises Canada's broadcasting and telecommunications systems in the public interest, such as consumer protection and competition.
[3] Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. (2019). *High-speed Access for All: Canada's Connectivity Strategy*, p. 5.
[4] Megabits per second (Mbps) is a unit of measurement used to indicate the speed and capacity of a network or internet connection. It measures the amount of data that can be transmitted per second over the connection. Downloading receives data from the internet to a local device such as a computer or phone (e.g., saving documents, streaming videos, downloading a mobile app), while uploading sends data from a local device to the internet (e.g., posting photos, emailing).
[5] Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) supports efficient and competitive marketplaces in Canada, including for the telecommunications industry by setting technical standards, managing radio spectrum, and certifying equipment.

Figure 2—Percentage of Households with Access to 50Mbps/10Mbps Internet Speeds Reported as of November 2025



Source: ised-isde.canada.ca/sts-sst/hsiad-tbihs/high-speed-internet-canada/en/universal-access/broadband-dashboard.html (6 March 2026).

Although there are some differences in data included in **Figure 2** (e.g., some provinces, such as Quebec, signed agreements with satellite providers so satellite access data is included; not all internet providers report data), most provinces, including Saskatchewan, and territories show a gap in access to high-speed internet for a portion of their populations.

Rural and remote communities identified challenges in accessing affordable, high-speed internet as the number one issue impeding their economic growth. While access to high-speed internet has been increasing, First Nations reserves and rural and remote communities continue to have less accessibility than urban centres.[6] A variety of technology options can help to address these gaps, including satellite.

2.1 SaskTel's Role in Making High-Speed Internet Available

In Saskatchewan, under *The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Act*, SaskTel is responsible for participating in establishing, constructing, and operating a coordinated telecommunications system throughout the province, including making high-speed internet available.[7]

SaskTel is the only remaining government-owned telecommunications corporation in Canada. As a Crown corporation operating in a competitive environment, SaskTel has to balance the role of generating profit for the province with helping people across the province access reliable and affordable high-speed internet (e.g., reinvesting to maintain, upgrade, and expand infrastructure).

[6] www.canada.ca/content/dam/oag-bvg/2021-2024-reports/documents/parl_oag_202303_02_e.pdf (8 April 2026).
[7] Telecommunications are defined as any means by which communication, video, computer, or data services are provided.

For example, SaskTel invested in expanding its fibre network to provide high-speed internet to some rural or remote communities where it does not expect to recover all its costs from those subscribers (i.e., projects with zero or negative investment returns).[8,9] These decisions reduce profits available to pay Provincial Government dividends but result in additional public investment in telecommunications services for Saskatchewan. By December 31, 2025, SaskTel had spent over $1 billion on building its fibre network.

SaskTel's ability to balance competing financial and social responsibilities is critical to its success in making quality and affordable high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan.

2.2 Expansion of Available Internet Technologies in Saskatchewan

During the past 15 years, internet availability in Saskatchewan has expanded through multiple internet technologies and service providers including SaskTel.

There are two ways to access high-speed internet—wired or wireless. **Figure 3** describes the main types of internet technologies used by households and businesses in Saskatchewan. Fibre is the leading high-speed internet technology SaskTel is implementing, supplemented by 5G cellular service.

Figure 3—Description of Enabling Technology to Access the Internet in Saskatchewan

Type	Enabling Technology	Description
Wired	Fibre	Fibre optic line is a type of cable that uses glass threads or plastic fibres to transmit data using pulses of light offering faster speeds than, for example, copper wires.
	Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)	DSL uses existing copper telephone lines to transmit data without disrupting phone service. It is an older technology with limited capacity compared to fibre.
Wireless	Cellular – 5G	5G is the fifth generation of wireless cellular technology. 5G uses radio waves to transmit data via advanced antenna technology and forms a dense network of small cell towers to enable more devices to connect simultaneously.
	Satellite	Low-Earth orbit (LEO) broadband systems involve large numbers of satellites (constellations) that orbit approximately 36 times closer to the Earth than traditional communications satellites, meaning better signal strength for users, while using less power.

Source: Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (2019), *High-Speed Access for All: Canada's Connectivity Strategy,* pp. 14 and 28, www.cisco.com/c/en_uk/solutions/routing-switching/dsl.html (10 April 2026), www.fortinet.com/uk/resources/cyberglossary/what-is-5g (17 November 2025).

SaskTel began implementing its fibre network to replace DSL in 2010, starting with major cities (e.g., Regina, Saskatoon), as shown in **Figure 4**. It began its Rural Fibre Initiative to reach more of rural Saskatchewan (e.g., Lloydminster, Maple Creek, Kitsaki Reserve) in 2020, and its Aurora Program in 2024 (with support from the Federal Government) to reach additional northern and remote communities (e.g., Wollaston Lake, Jan Lake, Cumberland House). SaskTel expects its completed fibre network will cost at least $1.4 billion to build; it spent over $1 billion by December 31, 2025. See **Section 5.0** for a list of communities,

[8] Fibre internet is a high-speed broadband service that transmits data as light through fibers, offering faster speeds, lower latency, and greater reliability than traditional cable internet.
[9] Networks are a collection of interconnected devices that communicate and share digital resources, enabling data exchange and connectivity across various applications, including accessing the internet. www.ibm.com/think/topics/networking (17 March 2026).

as of December 31, 2025, where SaskTel provided or expects to provide households access to its fibre network. Overall, SaskTel targeted giving 82% of Saskatchewan homes and businesses access to fibre by March 2026.

Figure 4—Fibre Expansion by SaskTel since 2010

Year	Action to Expand Fibre
2010	SaskTel starts replacing copper wire (DSL) with fibre for households in Saskatchewan's nine major cities (e.g., Saskatoon, Regina, Yorkton, Weyburn)
2016	CRTC declares broadband internet access a basic service
2018	Federal funding announced for connecting rural communities and institutions (SaskTel received $6.63 million)[A]
2018	Copper wire replaced with fibre in other larger communities where SaskTel customers exist (e.g., Emerald Park, Battleford, Nipawin)
2019	SaskTel starts to replace copper wire with fibre in other communities throughout the province (e.g., Pilot Butte, Biggar)
2019	Canada's Connectivity Strategy announced (target set—100% of Canadians expected to have access to high-speed internet by 2030)[B]
2020	SaskTel formalizes its actions to bring fibre to smaller communities throughout Saskatchewan, creating the Rural Fibre Initiative
2023	SaskTel establishes Saskatchewan's Broadband Strategy (see **Section 4.2**)
2024	Aurora Program starts with support of federal funding (SaskTel expects to receive up to $139 million)—plans to expand fibre to northern Saskatchewan[C]

Source: Adapted from SaskTel records.
[A] Part of $585M federal Connect to Innovate program launched in 2016. ised-isde.canada.ca/site/high-speed-internet-canada/en (6 March 2026).
[B] *High-speed Access for All: Canada's Connectivity Strategy* set a target of universal 50 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload speeds for all Canadians.
[C] Part of $3.225 billion federal Universal Broadband Fund launched in 2020 to provide funding to a range of high-speed internet projects across Canada. ised-isde.canada.ca/site/high-speed-internet-canada/en (6 March 2026).

By March 31, 2025, SaskTel reported reaching 364 of the 469 communities it serves with access to 50 Mbps/10 Mbps internet speed or higher.[10]

High-speed internet connectivity is a necessity in a modern economy. Without effective processes to make high-speed internet available throughout the province, SaskTel may not adequately contribute to Saskatchewan peoples' ability to communicate, work, learn, as well as access government services.

3.0 AUDIT CONCLUSION

We concluded, for the period ending December 31, 2025, SaskTel had, other than the following areas, effective processes for making high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan. SaskTel needs to:

- **Determine and use performance targets to report on the effectiveness of high-speed internet reliability**
- **Assess adequacy of initiatives used for making high-speed internet affordable to low-income households**

[10] *SaskTel 2024–25 Annual Report*, p. 11.

Figure 5—Audit Objective, Criteria, and Approach

Audit Objective: To assess the effectiveness of SaskTel's processes for making high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan for the period ending December 31, 2025.

Audit Criteria:

Processes to:

1. **Assess the internet needs of the people of Saskatchewan**
   - Identify internet requirements (e.g., minimum speed, reliability, affordability, geographical coverage, provincial/federal requirements)
   - Assess gap between internet needs and existing internet availability across the province (e.g., type, location, service providers)
   - Develop strategies to address needs (e.g., set targets, prioritize actions to reduce service gaps)
2. **Deliver strategies to meet internet needs**
   - Evaluate options to deliver strategies (e.g., build networks or partner with other service providers or governments, location, technology–wired such as fibre or wireless such as cellular or satellite)
   - Address risks that could impact access to quality and affordable internet (e.g., aging infrastructure, geographical conditions, weather, pricing)
   - Monitor internet expansion and upgrade projects
3. **Evaluate internet service delivery**
   - Analyze progress towards meeting internet needs including targets (e.g., available and used internet connections by location, frequency and length of internet outages)
   - Revise actions to achieve results
   - Report on internet service delivery

Audit Approach:

To conduct this audit, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate SaskTel's processes, we used the above criteria based on our related work, reviews of literature including reports of other auditors, and consultations with management and an external advisor. SaskTel management agreed with the above criteria.

We assessed SaskTel's processes relating to making high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan by interviewing key staff responsible for activities related to making high-speed internet available and observing SaskTel's fibre network monitoring. We also examined policies and procedures, risk plans, and strategy documents related to building and operating internet services, and tested samples of business cases and performance reports. We hired an expert to help assess SaskTel's processes against good practice.

4.0 Key Findings and Recommendations

4.1 High-Speed Internet Needs Sufficiently Identified

SaskTel sufficiently analyzed current internet trends and external (e.g., Federal Government) expectations to help it identify high-speed internet needs for the province.

In 2019, the Federal Government set a target for 100% of Canadians to have access to at least 50 Mbps/10 Mbps internet speeds by 2030, with 95% access reached by 2026.[11] SaskTel appropriately recognizes its role in helping the province work toward this national goal, along with other regionally operating internet service providers.

SaskTel also used its knowledge of network capacity and its subscribers' data usage trends to identify internet needs. For example, as the modern applications people use daily (e.g., streaming services, artificial intelligence) continue to evolve, people require more data to be processed faster. SaskTel expects people in Saskatchewan will soon require a minimum capacity to download at 100 Mbps and to upload at 20 Mbps, double the current

[11] Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. (2019). *High-speed Access for All: Canada's Connectivity Strategy*, p. 5.

target set by the Federal Government.[12] SaskTel is using this requirement to guide its capital investment decisions, so Saskatchewan is ready to meet this need as it evolves. It expects to use fibre as the main technology to deliver these speeds.

SaskTel conducts quarterly market analysis, which it used to identify communities it served without access to fibre. The analysis identified 156 out of 469 communities it served had access to fibre at November 2025; the remaining 313 communities without access to fibre accounted for about 13% of households SaskTel served. It considered the type of technology and speed available by community, along with demographics such as population, to help it identify service gaps. We found SaskTel used this information in its capital planning for determining where to provide fibre to communities next (see **Section 4.2**).

SaskTel also uses this market analysis to assess different internet packages for customers to choose an internet service level for their needs and budgets. It considered market share (number of subscribers compared to number of households), pricing compared to competitors, expected impact of offering higher speeds, and estimated initial capital and ongoing operational costs to determine pricing for various internet packages.

In addition, SaskTel considers customer feedback to help set future internet requirements. For example, its periodic (e.g., annual) survey indicated that SaskTel's customers are generally satisfied with its service.

Sufficiently identifying high-speed internet needs allows SaskTel to develop informed plans for increasing access across Saskatchewan.

4.2 Identified Needs Used for Increasing High-Speed Internet Availability

SaskTel determined how to make high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan based on identified needs.

SaskTel developed an overall Provincial Broadband Strategy in 2023 to address identified needs for high-speed internet throughout the province by evaluating technology and delivery options. It researched industry trends and emerging technologies, vendor-planned future developments, actions by its competitors, and customer feedback. We found it identified DSL, fibre, 5G cellular, and satellite as the technologies available to meet internet needs.

SaskTel, like other internet service providers, preferred fibre due to its:

- Longer expected life span (at least 25 years, compared to DSL that is reaching end of life and 5G cellular that is expected to be refreshed with new technology at least every five to seven years)
- Reliability (more consistent speeds and less connectivity issues than 5G cellular or satellite)

[12] *SaskTel 2024–25 Annual Report*, p. 16.

- Minimal maintenance and upgrade costs (e.g., electronic network components can be upgraded without replacement of the physical fibre cable)

We found SaskTel is working to expand its fibre network to meet high-speed internet needs for as many communities as determined reasonable based on consultation with the Provincial Government and in line with SaskTel's financial plans. It began building its fibre network in 2010. It continued expanding its fibre network to more communities each year and, in 2020, it started its Rural Fibre Initiative to continue expanding high-speed internet in rural Saskatchewan. In 2023, SaskTel formalized its planned actions in its Provincial Broadband Strategy as described in **Figure 6**.

Figure 6—Summary of SaskTel's Provincial Broadband Strategy

SaskTel's Provincial Broadband Strategy outlines its plan to lead the Saskatchewan market in broadband (e.g., high-speed internet) through the continued expansion and evolution of existing fibre and wireless networks. The Strategy aligns with Canada's Connectivity Strategy for ensuring all Canadians have access to high-speed internet at speeds of at least 50 Mbps/10 Mbps by 2030.

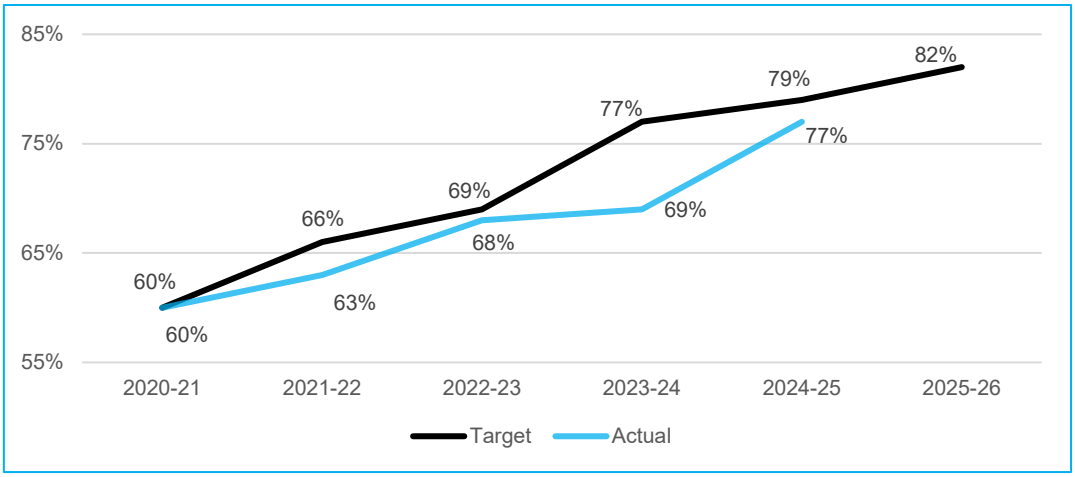
By 2025, SaskTel updated its plans to directly deliver broadband to approximately 90% of households by 2030 using various technologies including fibre and 5G cellular. Fibre-based broadband solutions offer long-term cost effectiveness and high bandwidth capabilities for most communities, while wireless-based broadband can economically cover wide distances for low-density populations. For the remaining 10% of households, the Strategy allows for different business models to deliver broadband throughout the province, such as partnering with other internet providers to bring broadband connectivity to hard-to-serve and high-cost-to-serve rural areas in Saskatchewan or sourcing external funding.

Source: Adapted from SaskTel records.

In its Strategy, SaskTel realized it may not be affordable to bring fibre to every community and household in the province due to the province's geography and widely dispersed population. Some communities are very remote with small populations or have many homes spread across large distances making connectivity difficult and costly; however, we found SaskTel reasonably suggested other service providers, including satellite providers, could meet the needs for remote and very hard to reach households.

Saskatchewan homes and business with access to SaskTel fibre has increased from 60% to 77% in the past five years with a set target of 82% for 2025–26 (see **Figure 7**).

Figure 7—Percentage of Saskatchewan Homes and Businesses with Access to SaskTel Fibre from 2020–2026



Source: SaskTel Annual Reports for 2020–21 to 2024–25, and records for 2025–26.

In addition to its Strategy, SaskTel considered internet affordability by offering consistent pricing province-wide to help keep internet service affordable for all communities including small, rural, and remote ones.

Strategies based on identified needs can help make high-speed internet available throughout the province.

4.3 Expanding Rural and Remote Connectivity through Two Key Initiatives

SaskTel continues to use two key initiatives to make high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan, notably in rural and remote communities.

Figure 8 outlines the two main initiatives for expanding SaskTel's high-speed internet across the province. The Rural Fibre Initiative expects to expand SaskTel's fibre network into 200 rural communities by December 2027. The Aurora Program plans to deliver fibre services to about 40 northern and Indigenous communities by March 2027.

Figure 8—SaskTel's Fibre Initiatives for Delivering on its Broadband Strategy at December 31, 2025

The Rural Fibre Initiative began in 2020, focused on expanding SaskTel's fibre network to rural communities, mostly in southern Saskatchewan. The initiative is a $280 million investment into nearly 200 rural communities by December 2027. Implemented in phases, this initiative assesses communities in groups from largest to smallest and develops business cases to support each phase. By December 2025, SaskTel spent $191 million on this initiative.

The Aurora Program began in 2024, focused on improving wireless and broadband services to parts of northern Saskatchewan. To date this initiative involves four projects expected to cost $164 million, including up to $139 million in federal funding, to deliver fibre internet services to more than 6,000 households in about 40 northern and Indigenous communities by March 2027. By December 2025, SaskTel spent $75 million on this initiative.

Source: www.sasktel.com/about-us/news/2025/rural-connectivity-gets-a-speed-boost (10 April 2026); *SaskTel 2024–25 Annual Report*, p. 7; www.northamericaoutlookmag.com/technology/sasktel-connecting-saskatchewan (10 April 2026); SaskTel records.

SaskTel prepared five business cases in 2024 and 2025 to support delivery of its two initiatives. We found the business cases focused on deciding whether to expand fibre to selected communities, and recommended satellite offered by other service providers as an alternative for remaining (e.g., remote) communities. For the two business cases we assessed, we found SaskTel identified how the project would address gaps in fibre service within the province to meet its targets for providing Saskatchewan homes and businesses with access to SaskTel's fibre network.

The business cases included:

- Financial analysis (e.g., cash flow projections, cost per household)
- Milestones (e.g., construction completion dates)
- Mitigation plans for key risks (e.g., redirect contractors to stay on schedule, coordinate with other agencies such as SaskPower to manage interdependencies)
- Other benefits expected (e.g., improved internet reliability or speed)

We found the business cases properly approved by SaskTel management and its Board.

The detailed financial analyses in the business cases supported decisions around project viability. For example, analyses included cash flow projections related to initial and ongoing costs (e.g., maintenance) and revenues to determine the return on investment.

In addition to financial analysis for a project, SaskTel also considered expected social benefits and possible external funding sources in its business cases. External funding may come from community partnerships, where a community agrees to fund part of the capital cost of setting up the service, or federal programs (e.g., Aurora Program).[13] SaskTel expected to incur losses for certain individual phases of its various fibre initiatives for making high-speed internet available.

We found SaskTel had a reasonable approach for prioritizing fibre installation to communities based on population and cost. For example, it focuses on largest to smallest community sizes to reach more of the population faster. One of SaskTel's other core decision-making metrics for determining if fibre is economically viable in a community is cost per household.

Use of business cases with financial and operational analysis helps SaskTel support decisions about making high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan.

4.4 Regular Reporting on High-Speed Internet Initiatives

SaskTel provided monthly reports to its Executive Committee and quarterly reports to its Board about the status of its high-speed internet initiatives.

SaskTel reported on the status of its two main initiatives—Aurora and Rural Fibre—at meetings with its Board and various management groups, as well as with Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan (CIC). We found management reported at least monthly to its Executive Committee and at least quarterly to its Board and CIC.

The four Executive and Board reports we tested included details about:

- Budget and actual cost
- Progress toward planned schedules
- Changes in initiative/project scope
- Quality concerns
- Updates on risks
- Actions taken to keep initiatives on track
- Differences between actual and planned results

[13] ised-isde.canada.ca/site/high-speed-internet-canada/en/universal-broadband-fund (19 March 2026).

SaskTel recommended changes to the initiatives based on analysis in the reports. For example, it recommended expanding the scope of the Aurora Program to include more communities after identifying cost efficiencies. As of December 31, 2025, SaskTel did not expect to exceed its approved budgets for the initiatives.

We also found SaskTel applied lessons learned to subsequent phases of the initiatives. For example, based on experience from earlier fibre projects, it shifted to directional drilling as the standard burial method to install the fibre and abandoned its experimental copper-replacement techniques.

Regular reports to its Executive and Board supports oversight of SaskTel's initiatives to make high-speed internet available throughout the province and identifies adjustments to keep the initiatives on track and on budget.

4.5 Addressing Risks to Quality and Affordable High-Speed Internet

SaskTel is expanding its fibre network to address the risk that households throughout Saskatchewan do not have sufficient access to high-speed internet. It uses network monitoring tools to manage internet quality risks and participates in a low-income household program to manage affordability risks.

We found SaskTel is expanding its fibre network to as many communities as possible because fibre brings lower risk of interruptions (e.g., for repairs) and interference (e.g., due to bad weather). By incorporating high levels of resiliency through alternate routes, internet traffic can flow if an outage or fibre cut occurs. For example, one core internet fibre location can automatically assume traffic from another location or be more easily rerouted in the event of failure.

SaskTel constantly monitors network reliability, capacity, outages, and inactivity using IT tools and established procedures. The IT tools trigger alarms to SaskTel network staff who act to resolve issues. We observed these tools operated as expected.

SaskTel aims to provide continuous 24/7 service. It tracks outages and their resolutions in IT systems, and network staff discuss outages at bi-weekly meetings to identify any ongoing or repeat issues. Network staff report incidents to management based on established thresholds (e.g., to senior management for major outages—affecting more than 1,000 subscribers and lasting more than 4 hours). SaskTel also must report outages to its regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), based on standards set (e.g., over 600,000 total user-minutes affected by the outage; primary loss of services to a remote, isolated, or rural community).

SaskTel experiences multiple outages each year, but most are minor and impact few customers. We found SaskTel:

- Reported to CRTC eight major outages in 2025 (one in 2024)[14]
- Followed its process to document, escalate, and resolve issues within established timelines for the three outages we tested

[14] crtc.gc.ca/otf/eng/2019/8000/c12-201909780.htm?_ga=2.83671382.1772326715.1708225761-1582208442.1654005964#correspondences_2025 (13 March 2026).

While SaskTel tracks outage information, it does not have a performance indicator for assessing its internet reliability—see **Section 4.6**.

We found SaskTel also builds its fibre network using methods that reduce risk. For example, it buries fibre deep enough to be less likely cut and, where it is difficult to dig a trench to bury the fibre, it attaches the fibre to above ground poles.

SaskTel established processes for consulting with First Nations, including impacts on traditional lands, and collaborating on projects that will provide their communities with quality high-speed internet access.

SaskTel is replacing much of its aging copper DSL network with fibre to reduce outages and repair costs. Fibre is more reliable, with a much longer physical life expectancy, and lowers the risk of failure. The lower repair expenses help to manage the cost of the fibre network, supporting more affordable pricing for customers.

SaskTel also voluntarily participates in the federal Connecting Families Initiative for low-income households to access affordable high-speed internet (see **Figure 9** for details).[15]

Figure 9—SaskTel Participation in Federal Connecting Families Initiative

In 2018, SaskTel committed to participating in the federal Connecting Families Initiative offering discounted internet (e.g., $20/month) in line with Canada's Connectivity Strategy, which aims to provide all Canadians with access to Internet speeds of at least 50 Mbps/10 Mbps.

Households are eligible to participate in the Initiative if they receive the maximum amount of the Canada Child Benefit or are seniors receiving at least 80% of the maximum amount of the Guaranteed Income Supplement. The Federal Government determines which households are eligible for the program and internet service providers, including SaskTel, absorb the impact of the lower prices charged.

Source: ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en/programs-and-initiatives/connecting-families-initiative/eligibility (13 March 2026).

Effective risk management processes can help identify and mitigate key risks impacting access to quality and affordable high-speed internet throughout Saskatchewan.

4.6 Targets Used to Monitor Effectiveness of Internet Service Accessibility Except for Reliability and Affordability

SaskTel used targets to assess the effectiveness of high-speed internet service accessibility across Saskatchewan except for reliability and affordability.

SaskTel identified several performance indicators to evaluate whether its high-speed internet service delivery achieves the expected benefits as summarized in **Figure 10**. We found it set a target for each indicator.

Figure 10—SaskTel Internet-Related Performance Indicators by Theme

Performance Theme	Performance Reporting by SaskTel along with 2025–26 Target	Examples of Other Potential Performance Indicators
High-Speed Geographical Coverage	**82%** of Saskatchewan homes & businesses with access to fibre (100 Mbps) **60** Rural fibre communities enabled **28** Aurora fibre communities enabled	**SaskTel had sufficient targets to monitor high-speed internet coverage.**

[15] ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en/programs-and-initiatives/connecting-families-initiative (13 March 2026).

Performance Theme	Performance Reporting by SaskTel along with 2025–26 Target	Examples of Other Potential Performance Indicators
Quality	**82%** of Saskatchewan homes & businesses with access to fibre (100 Mbps) **8.1** / 10 Satisfaction Index – consumer (individual) **8.1** / 10 Satisfaction Index – business We found the Satisfaction Index indicators too general to sufficiently assess reliability of the internet service, an important aspect for users.	**Reliability performance targets could be set for internet availability, number of planned outages, and time to restore services.** Availability performance indicators and targets as noted below could be set and broken down by type of internet service (e.g., fibre, DSL), geographical area, or other useful categories, and exclude or report separately the impact of planned maintenance. Annual internet availability rate: For example, total minutes of unplanned internet outages divided by total annual minutes. Number of unplanned outages customers experience on average in a year: For example, SaskTel tracks outages including communities and customers impacted. Annual average time to restore service after an outage (i.e., length of unplanned service interruption).
Affordability	Customer internet market share – not publicly reported (internal only) given SaskTel's competitive environment We found this indicator insufficient since other factors may affect market share and market share may not reflect all relevant matters such as internet access by lower income households.	**Affordability performance targets could be set for the percentage of households obtaining discounted internet.** Assessment of households subscribing through affordability programs compared to total eligible households: For example, SaskTel had approximately 3,300 subscribers in the Federal Connecting Families Initiative as of February 2026 and could obtain the total number of eligible households for comparison. Assessment of the cost of basic internet packages for low-income households in Saskatchewan: For example, SaskTel's lowest cost infiNET plan at December 2025 cost nearly $1,000 annually before discounts, or about 1.5% of annual income for a family earning $65,000.[A]

Source: Adapted from SaskTel annual reports and records.
[A] Saskatchewan's 2026 tax-free threshold for a family of four is $65,000 (i.e., threshold where a family of four will pay no provincial income tax, representing the threshold for a low-income family). www.saskatchewan.ca/government /news-and-media/2025/december/31/income-tax-cut-plus-indexation-gives-family-of-four-in-saskatchewan-the-highest-tax-free-income-in-c#:~:text=The%20second%20step%20of%20the,income%20tax%20threshold%20in%20Canada (19 March 2026).

SaskTel uses the percentage of households with access to its fibre network and subscribed to its fibre services to evaluate its strategies for high-speed internet coverage, as shown in **Figure 10**. We found its indicators reasonable in highlighting the extent to which Saskatchewan households have access to quality high-speed internet through its fibre network.

SaskTel used two indicators based on customer surveys to assess overall quality of its services. It uses a third-party consultant to survey its customers and establish a panel to provide an efficient way to obtain ongoing customer feedback on various topics that include internet services. In addition, some aspects of quality, such as speed, are built into its indicators about access to fibre, since fibre provides expected speeds. However, SaskTel

does not address another important aspect of quality of high-speed internet—reliability—through its performance indicators.

We found SaskTel has relevant data about fibre network outages to develop indicators about reliability and report results. We provide some examples of possible indicators (e.g., internet availability) in **Figure 10**.

Without establishing and monitoring achievement of internet reliability targets, SaskTel may not take timely action to resolve reliability issues, and the Government and the public may not have sufficient information to assess reliability of SaskTel's service.

1. **We recommend SaskTel determine and use performance targets to report on the reliability of its high-speed internet.**

SaskTel, as a Crown corporation, has a role in contributing to Government's broader affordability goals for Saskatchewan residents.[16]

SaskTel used one of its business indicators to also help it assess affordability—customer internet market share (see **Figure 10**). This indicator can provide some indication of internet affordability for households in urban centres that can readily choose from various options offered by multiple service providers, but it lacks sufficient depth to assess affordability for lower-income or more remote households with fewer options.

We provide examples in **Figure 10** of how SaskTel could use data to further assess affordability of its internet services. In the first example, as SaskTel covers the cost, but does not determine eligibility for the Federal Connecting Families Initiative, it may need to obtain eligibility data from or work with the Federal Government (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, ISED) to determine whether the uptake of this program by its customers is reasonable. The other example may require working with others in the Provincial Government (e.g., Ministry of Social Services) and/or Federal Government to define a reasonable amount of income to spend on internet within the context of expected total household costs (e.g., housing, food, transportation, clothing, power and energy, phone). We expect SaskTel would work with the Provincial and Federal Governments to identify internet affordability gaps and what action, if any, could be taken to address these gaps, by whom (e.g., SaskTel, other government agencies), and how it would be funded.

Without sufficiently assessing affordability initiatives it uses, SaskTel may not adequately support the Government in helping low-income households across the province access affordable high-speed internet.

2. **We recommend SaskTel assess the adequacy of initiatives it uses for making high-speed internet affordable to Saskatchewan low-income households.**

SaskTel analyzed data from its IT systems to report on performance indicators (see **Figure 11**) including information on the number of households in each community and subscribers for each of its services. It used analytical tools to further combine and analyze data from across its various IT systems for reporting purposes.

[16] The 2026–27 Provincial Budget includes a government priority to ensure Saskatchewan remains among the most affordable provinces in the nation for families and residents. Government of Saskatchewan, *Provincial Budget 2026–27*, p. 1.

SaskTel reported about internet service delivery to its Executive Committee monthly and its Board and CIC quarterly for all five indicators, and annually to the public for the three indicators highlighted in **Figure 11**.

Figure 11—SaskTel Internet-Related Performance Indicators by Theme

Performance Indicator	2024–25 Target	2024–25 Actual	2025–26 Target
Homes & businesses with access to fibre (100 Mbps) in Saskatchewan	**79%**	77%	**82%**
New rural fibre communities enabled	**50**	53	**60**
New Aurora fibre communities enabled	**N/A[A]**	N/A[A]	**28**
Satisfaction Index – consumer	**8.1**	8.0	**8.1**
Satisfaction Index – business	**8.1**	8.0	**8.1**

Source: SaskTel records and *SaskTel 2024–25 Annual Report*, pp. 15 and 16.
[A] Aurora Program did not start until 2024, enabling household connections to fibre after construction by 2025–26.
Shaded performance indicators are included in SaskTel's *2024–25 Annual Report*.

In 2024–25, SaskTel did not achieve its target for access to fibre of 79% (actual 77%)—**Figure 7** shows SaskTel did not meet its access to fibre target for four of the past five years. It provided explanations when it did not meet its targets (e.g., in 2023–24, SaskTel missed its target by 8% due to challenges receiving critical infrastructure equipment such as that used to bury fibre optic cables and in gaining access to infrastructure such as utility poles used for suspending fibre optic cables).

Evaluating and reporting on its progress for making high-speed internet available throughout the province can help inform changes that result in quality and affordable high-speed internet for all Saskatchewan communities.

4.7 Actions Revised to Achieve Results

SaskTel revised its planned actions to address challenges that could prevent it from achieving its internet-related performance targets.

Reports to SaskTel's Executive Committee described challenges impacting fibre implementation projects and how these challenges impact achievement of its targets for providing homes and businesses with access to SaskTel fibre as shown in **Figure 11**. Reports provided root causes driving these challenges along with recommended and alternative actions to address those root causes.

For example, the extreme wildfire season in 2025 impacted SaskTel's ability to complete ongoing work for the Hanson Lake Road fibre expansion project (part of the Aurora Program). SaskTel adjusted its work schedules to work on other fibre projects in the Aurora Program not impacted by fire and return later in the year to complete work along the Hanson Lake Road. This allowed SaskTel to continue providing access to fibre to communities, allow for eventual fibre to the planned communities on the Hanson Lake Road, and stay on track for the Federal Government funding deadline.

In another example, SaskTel identified challenges related to regulations that would require internet service providers to give each other access to fibre networks at wholesale costs set by CRTC. This could allow other companies to use SaskTel's fibre networks with limited investment, which could negatively impact SaskTel's profits. To address this challenge, SaskTel has been working with other small telecoms to help CRTC understand issues around wholesale access to fibre.[17]

Revising actions to address challenges as they arise helps SaskTel to meet expectations for making high-speed internet available throughout Saskatchewan.

5.0 Communities with or Planned Installation of SaskTel Fibre as of December 31, 2025

Communities with or Planned Installation of SaskTel Fibre as of December 31, 2025			
Aberdeen	Duck Lake	Leroy	Regina
Air Ronge	Dundurn	Lipton	Regina Beach
Allan	East Trout Lake	Little Bear Lake	Rocanville
Alsask	Eastend	Little Red River Reserve	Rockglen
Anglin Lake	Eatonia	Lloydminster	Rose Valley
Arborfield	Edam	Lower Fishing Lake	Rosetown
Arcola	Elbow	Lumsden	Rosthern
Asquith	Elk Ridge	Luseland	Rouleau
Assiniboia	Elrose	Macklin	Sandy Bay
Avonlea	Emerald Park	Maidstone	Saskatoon
Badgerville	Esterhazy	Manitou Beach	Semans
Balcarres	Estevan	Mankota	Shaunavon
Balgonie	Eston	Manor	Shellbrook
Ballantyne Bay	Foam Lake	Maple Creek	Sled Lake
Battleford	Fond du Lac	Marshall	Southend Reserve
Beauval	Fort Qu'Appelle	Martensville	Southey
Beechy	Frontier	Maryfield	Spiritwood
Bengough	Glaslyn	McLean	Springside
Bethune	Good Spirit Provincial Park	McPhee Lake	St. Brieux
Big Head Reserve	Govan	Meadow Lake	St. Louis
Big River	Grand Coulee	Melfort	St. Walburg
Biggar	Grandmother's Bay Reserve	Melville	Stanley Mission
Black Lake	Gravelbourg	Meota	Stanley Mission Reserve
Big Island Lake Cree Territory	Green Lake	Middle Lake	Star City
Birch Hills	Grenfell	Milestone	Stockholm
Blaine Lake	Gull Lake	Mistawasis Reserve	Stony Rapids
Borden	Hall Lake	Moose Jaw	Stoughton
Bruno	Hafford	Moosomin	Strasbourg
B-Say-Tah	Hague	Morse	Sturgeon Lake
Buchanan	Hanley	Mossbank	Sturgeon Landing
Buena Vista	Hatchet Lake Reserve	Muenster	Sturgis
Buffalo Narrows	Hepburn	Naicam	Sweetgrass Reserve
Burstall	Herbert	Neilburg	Swift Current
		Neudorf	

[17] crtc.gc.ca/eng/transcripts/2024/tt0213.htm (23 April 2026).

Communities with or Planned Installation of SaskTel Fibre as of December 31, 2025			
Cabri	Hudson Bay	Nipawin	Theodore
Candle Lake	Humboldt	Nokomis	Thunderchild Reserve
Canora	Île-à-la-Crosse	Norquay	Tisdale
Canwood	Imperial	North Battleford	Turtleford
Carlyle	Indian Head	Ogema	Tyrrell Lake
Carnduff	Ituna	One Arrow Reserve	Unity
Caronport	James Smith Reserve	Osler	Vanscoy
Carrot River	Jan Lake	Outlook	Vibank
Central Butte	Kamsack	Oxbow	Vonda
Chitek Lake	Katepwa Lake	Pakwaw Lake	Wadena
Chitek Lake Reserve	Kelliher	Paddockwood	Wakaw
Choiceland	Kelvington	Paradise Hill	Waldheim
Christopher Lake	Kenosee Lake	Pelican Narrows	Wapella
Churchbridge	Kerrobert	Pelican Narrows Reserve	Warman
Clavet	Kindersley	Pelly	Waskesiu Lake
Cochin	Kinistin Reserve	Pemmican Portage	Watrous
Colonsay	Kinistino	Pense	Watson
Coronach	Kinookimaw Beach	Perdue	Wawota
Craik	Kipling	Pierceland	Weyburn
Cudworth	Kitsaki Reserve	Pilot Butte	Whelan Bay
Cumberland House	Kyle	Pinehouse	White City
Cumberland House Reserve	La Loche	Ponteix	White Fox
Cupar	La Ronge	Porcupine Plain	Whitecap Reserve
Cut Knife	Lac Pelletier	Preeceville	Whiteswan Lakes
Cypress Hills Provincial Park	Lafleche	Prince Albert	Whitewood
Dalmeny	Lake Lenore	Punnichy	Willow Bunch
Davidson	Lampman	Qu'Appelle	Wilkie
Debden	Langenburg	Quill Lake	Wollaston Lake
Delisle	Langham	Radisson	Wolseley
Denare Beach	Lanigan	Radville	Wynyard
Deschambault Lake	Lashburn	Raymore	Yellow Grass
Dinsmore	Leader	Red Earth Reserve	Yorkton
Dore Lake	Leask	Redvers	
	Lemberg		

Source: Adapted from SaskTel records. Includes communities in the Rural Fibre Initiative up to Phase 7; SaskTel has not publicly announced communities that may be added in any future phases.

6.0 SELECTED REFERENCES

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