



**Build**   
NOVA SCOTIA

# **NSFM Connectivity and Emergency Response**

April 29, 2024

# The Future of Cellular Connectivity

- Satellite cellular connectivity
- Capital program slowdowns hinge on the level of support provided by federal and provincial governments for these initiatives.
- The increasing popularity of unlimited data plans has led to intense data usage, putting pressure on the current infrastructure.
- The Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and data transition and control are shaping the future of technology.
- Fixed Wireless Access as an option (Pictou)



# Cellular for Nova Scotia Program



The **\$47.3 million** investment in the Program will expand the province's telecommunication infrastructure and communication networks through a two-phased approach.



**\$3.3 million** is being invested to build four new trunked mobile radio 2 (TMR2) towers to expand radio coverage for first responders in areas identified as strategic locations (Cape Breton, Inverness, Richmond and Queen's Counties).



The target is to achieve the following service levels where Nova Scotians live, work, and travel on major roadways.

- **99%** coverage for basic voice call service.
- **95%** coverage for standard-definition service.
- **85%** coverage for high-definition service.



# Current State and Future Direction



Build Nova Scotia conducted a cell gap study to analyze cell service levels. This study has highlighted coverage gaps for civic addresses and stretches of unserved or underserved roadways across Nova Scotia.



Phase 1 is focused on **utilizing existing infrastructure** to address coverage gaps and enhance service.



Phase 2, initially **focusing on the 100 series highways and principal roads**, will address the remaining coverage gaps by exploring various solutions, including potential new infrastructure and alternative technologies.



# Ongoing Priorities



Collaborating with all levels of stakeholders to enhance connectivity, ensuring that the solutions we identify are sustainable and align with any ongoing or planned federal initiatives.



Advocating with the CRTC for shared tower access, more competition, federal infrastructure funding, essential status for cellular coverage, and legislative recognition as an essential service.



Exploring new infrastructure and alternative technologies, guided by consultations with industry experts to ensure effective and innovative progress.





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**Thank You**

### Rural Cell Phone Coverage for Emergency Preparedness

Letters calling on NSFM to consider Rural Cell Phone Coverage for Emergency Preparedness as an advocacy priority have been received from the following members:

- Joint letter
  - Municipality of Shelburne
  - Town of Lockeport
  - Town of Shelburne
  - Town of Clark's Harbour
  - Municipality of Barrington
- District of Yarmouth

Related to this call is the October 26, 2023, announcement that the Province will be investing \$47. million in cell tower development in response to a cellular coverage study. The initiative will involve two phases: 1) requesting proposals for innovative and cost-effective solutions using existing infrastructure, 2) closing remaining gaps in coverage with new infrastructure.

As explained below, both the provincial and federal government have announced new obligations for telecommunications companies (i.e.: Eastlink, Bell, Rogers, and Telus).

#### **Build NS Update:**

In the last meeting of the NSFM Public Safety Advisory Committee, Build NS informed committee members that they are still in Phase 1 of this initiative as existing public and private cellular service infrastructure that could be expanded and built on is identified. There are also additional funds being allocated to the expansion of TMR radio coverage for responders. Build NS explained that Phase 1 should be completed shortly. Phase 2 will involve public infrastructure development. There will be substantive engagement as this project rolls out and Build NS invites NSFM to be a part of this.

A committee member asked what Build NS sees the role of municipalities being in this cellular coverage expansion project. Build NS CEO responded with the following:

- Move along any pre-existing expansion agreements that haven't been completed yet;
- Advocate to move the process along would be helpful;
- Use common messaging with Build NS; and
- Help to mediate with local community assets and supporters.

Committee members requested Build NS to provide information that could be used as common messaging.

#### **Federal Government:**

As of February 2023, telecommunications providers have been obligated to notify the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and to work together to provide service when they experience network outages. CRTC is planning additional consultations to improve network resiliency, access to emergency services, consumer communication and compensation, the impact of outages on accessibility services and the imposition of penalties on service providers.

### **Provincial Government:**

Following Hurricane Fiona, Minister Lohr presented Bill 198 to the provincial legislature to amend the Emergency 911 Act and the Emergency Management Act.

As a summary, the amendments made by this bill include:

- Require telecommunications companies to take all reasonable actions to ensure continued service;
- Increase possible fines for non-compliance from \$5,000 to \$250,000;
- Grant the Governor in Council new regulatory powers respecting required preparation and notification actions of telecommunications companies;
- Define “critical service provider” and “emergency event” in the Emergency Management Act;
- Require critical service providers to submit emergency response plans to the Minister annually and to participate in an emergency planning and response table convened by the Minister;
- Grant the Minister new regulatory powers to designate critical service providers and all required aspects of emergency response plans.

The full text of Bill 198 is provided below.

This Bill was given Royal Assent on November 9, 2023. These amendments will come into force upon their Proclamation, which has not occurred yet. This Proclamation will most likely be delayed during the formation of the new Department of Emergency Management.

**An Act to Amend Chapter 4  
of the Acts of 1992,  
the Emergency "911" Act,  
and Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990,  
the Emergency Management Act**

**EMERGENCY "911" ACT**

1 Clause 3(g) of Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1992, the Emergency "911" Act, as enacted by Chapter 15 of the Acts of 2019, is amended by adding "and Housing" immediately after "Affairs" in the second line.

2 Chapter 4 is further amended by adding immediately after Section 9 the following Section:

9A (1) A local telecommunications service provider shall take all reasonable actions, including actions required by the regulations, to ensure that its customers in the Province have continued access to the NS 911 service.

(2) In the event of any disruptions to the NS 911 service, a local telecommunications service provider shall, in the manner and form prescribed by the regulations,

(a) immediately notify the Minister of the disruption;

(b) immediately notify the public of the location of the disruption and the expected restoration time; and

(c) provide regular updates to the Minister and the public until the service is restored.

(3) Where requested by the Minister, a local telecommunications service provider shall participate in meetings with the Minister, emergency service agencies or other parties associated with the system to support and co-operate in the ongoing maintenance of the system.

3 Chapter 4 is further amended by adding immediately after Section 13 the following Section:

13A (1) Notwithstanding Section 13, a local telecommunications service provider who violates Section 9A is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a penalty of not more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

(2) Where an offence under Section 9A is committed or continued on more than one day, the local telecommunications service provider that committed the offence is liable to be convicted for a separate offence for each day on which the offence is committed or continued.

4 Subsection 14(1) of Chapter 4, as amended by Chapter 4 of the Acts of 2000 and Chapter 15 of the Acts of 2019, is further amended by adding immediately after clause (ea) the following clauses:

(eb) respecting actions required of a local telecommunications service provider under subsection (1) of Section 9A;

- (ec) prescribing the form and manner of notifications required under subsection (2) of Section 9A;
- (ed) respecting conditions for the notifications required under subsection (2) of Section 9A;
- (ee) establishing criteria applicable to establish a disruption for the purpose of subsection (2) of Section 9A;
- (ef) identifying a person or class of persons responsible for the compliance and enforcement of this Act;
- (eg) respecting the compliance and enforcement of this Act generally;

**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACT**

5 Section 2 of Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act, as amended by Chapter 48 of the Acts of 2005, Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2011 and Chapter 34 of the Acts of 2014, is further amended by

(a) adding immediately before clause (aa) the following clause:

(a) "critical service provider" means a non-governmental entity, designated by the regulations, that provides a service expected to be continually provided to all of its customers in the Province, including during an emergency event, and includes a local telecommunications service provider in the Province;

(b) adding "and Housing" immediately after "Affairs" in the first line of clause (aa);

(c) adding immediately after clause (b) the following clause:

(c) "emergency event" means a real or anticipated event that is communicated by the Minister to be an emergency event and that could impact the health, safety or welfare of Nova Scotians, their property or the environment and includes

(i) when a provincial coordination centre or a municipal operations centre is activated due to a pending, perceived or actual emergency,

(ii) a declared state of emergency, and

(iii) a declared state of local emergency;

(d) adding "and Housing" immediately after "Affairs" in the first line of clause (g); and

(e) adding immediately after clause (i) the following clause:

(ia) "service disruption" means a temporary disruption or degradation of service that interferes with the ability of the customer to carry out or continue with the customer's usual activities associated with the service and meets such other criteria as established by the regulations, but does not include not having service in an area of the Province that does not regularly have service;

6 Chapter 8 is further amended by adding immediately after Section 11 the following Sections:

11A (1) A critical service provider shall take all reasonable actions, including any action required by the regulations, to ensure the continuation of service to all of its customers in the Province during an emergency event.

(2) A critical service provider shall prepare an emergency response plan setting out how the provider's critical service will continue to be provided to customers in the Province during an emergency event.

(3) The plan required by subsection (2) must include

(a) the different types of potential emergency events that may effect the critical service provider's critical service;

(b) any backup systems or service providers relied upon to ensure continuity of service to the critical service provider's Provincial customers during an emergency event;

(c) how the emergency response plan will integrate with Provincial emergency management plans; and

(d) any other information required by the regulations.

(4) A critical service provider shall submit to and obtain approval from the Minister of the provider's emergency response plan on or before August 31st in each year.

(5) A critical service provider shall participate in emergency response planning exercises as required by the regulations.

11B (1) The Minister may establish an emergency planning and response table to respond to an emergency event.

(2) Where the Minister determines that a critical service provider's participation is necessary at the table established under subsection (1) to adequately respond to an emergency event, a critical service provider shall ensure it has a minimum of one representative in physical attendance at the location identified in any notice provided to it.

(3) Where a critical service provider is required to provide a representative by subsection (2), the critical service provider shall ensure it has a representative available at the table for the duration of the emergency event.

(4) For the purpose of protecting the health, safety or welfare of Nova Scotians, their property or the environment, the Minister may require a critical service provider to share records on matters relevant to the critical service provider's response to the emergency event.

7 Chapter 8 is further amended by adding immediately after Section 16 the following Section:

16A Where a critical service provider that

(a) provides access to the 911 emergency telephone system for the reporting of emergencies to emergency service agencies, as regulated under the Emergency "911" Act and regulations made under that Act; or

(b) communicates Alert Ready, the system of issuing broadcast intrusive and non-broadcast intrusive public alerts to Nova Scotians through radio, television and LTE connected mobile phones,

has a service disruption, it shall provide any affected customer with a pro-rated rebate on the customer's next bill to reflect the lack of service, as set out in the regulations.

8 Chapter 8 is further amended by adding immediately after Section 23A the following Section:

23B (1) Notwithstanding Section 23, a critical service provider who contravenes or fails to comply with Section 11A, 11B or 16A is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

(2) Where an offence under Section 11A, 11B or 16A is committed or continued on more than one day, the critical service provider that committed the offence is liable to be convicted for a separate offence for each day on which the offence is committed or continued.

9 Subsection 25(1) of Chapter 8, as amended by Chapter 48 of the Acts of 2005, Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2009 and Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2011, is further amended by

(a) adding immediately after clause (ca) the following clauses:

(cb) designating a service provider as a critical service provider for the purpose of clause (a) of Section 2;

(cc) respecting information required to be included in an emergency response plan for the purpose of clause (d) of subsection (3) of Section 11A;

(cd) respecting emergency response planning exercises for the purpose of subsection (5) of Section 11A;

(ce) respecting the criteria applicable to establish a service disruption for the purpose of clause (ia) of Section 2;

(cf) respecting the rebate to be provided to a customer in the event of a service disruption, including any eligibility criteria for the rebate;

(cg) identifying a person or class of persons responsible for compliance and enforcement of this Act;

(ch) respecting compliance and enforcement of this Act generally;and

(b) adding immediately after clause (h) the following clause:

(ha) further defining any word or expression defined in this Act;

10 This Act comes into force on such day as the Governor in Council orders and declares by proclamation.