

News Release



Media Contact:

Maggie Matear
Director of Operations, NEOnet
705.360.1353 ext. 1
mmatear@neonet.on.ca

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday November 29, 2004

Gogama Goes Ga Ga Over Digital Cellular!

GOGAMA, ON. - People driving to Gogama and Sudbury will now be a little safer as they travel Highway 144. NEOnet's cellular expansion project hit another milestone this month with the completion of three new cell phone towers between here and Sudbury along Hwy 144. One tower is located in Stetham Township near the Mattagami First Nation turn off, one at the Watershed, and one approximately 5km past Gogama. This brings the present total to four towers along hwy 144. Northern Telephone has already activated two of the three new towers on November 10th, with plans to activate the third one at the Watershed in mid-December.

Each tower sends a signal with a radius of 18 km. Combined, these four towers will provide cell phone coverage on the first 150km of the hwy as well as many of the surrounding lakes and roads in the area. The new towers use 1X digital technology which allows you to send and receive emails, surf the web, and send pictures on your wireless device.

"This marks an important step forward in our efforts to open up the north to businesses and tourists," said NEOnet chair, Christy Marinig. "The new cellular services along hwy 144 will improve safety, encouraging more people to use it."

"At \$500,000 per tower, a project like this needs a lot of committed partners," said Marinig. "This project would not have been possible without the help of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, FedNor, and NorthernTel Mobility.

Cellular access hasn't been available on the road to Sudbury until now and the response from residents of Gogama has been immense. Four days before tower activation, the Hamlet of Gogama held a cellular information session at its local community centre. The response was amazing. Over one quarter of Gogama's population showed up to the session to learn about cell phones.

NorthernTel's Randy Winters was busy answering questions from enthused community members as they flooded the small community hall, wanting to be involved in the excitement. Various technical information was made available to the public along with pricing options and promotional offers. The cell phone penetration rate in Gogama is already between 12 and 15%.

Organizer Gerry Talbot of the Gogama Community Access Program also took the opportunity to celebrate the launch of Gogama's new web site, www.gogama.ca. "We're very excited to have cell phone access in our community," says Talbot. "This will help our efforts to attract tourists to experience what Gogama has to offer," said Talbot.