

# Silver Beach brings neighbourhood up to speed

## *High-speed agreement with Bell will benefit beyond development's investors*

**GREG HOEKSTRA**

*Staff Reporter*

A "four-lane super highway" could be snaking its way through Haliburton County within the next year, and despite the potential for lots of traffic, residents and cottagers won't even hear a peep.

That's because the highway in question is not a road but a series of wires and fibre optic cables, which will bring top-of-the-line telecommunications services to Haliburton County, and, more specifically, the future site of Gerry Kowalski's Silver Beach Lifestyle Community.

More than half a year ago, Kowalski, who owns and operates the Silver Beach Camping and Trailer Park, approached Bell Canada with an ambitious proposal. If Bell was willing to bring its highest quality Internet,

telephone and satellite television services to his proposed condominium development, he would, in turn, offer them the opportunity to be the exclusive provider for all 59 condo owners.

At first, Kowalski admits, it took a little pestering – mixed with healthy doses of patience and persistence. But now, months later, Kowalski can boast that he found a recipe for success, and based on the strength of his "first-class" development, Bell Canada has agreed to come to the table and expand their network to what they call the "newer Muskoka area."

Last month, sitting in the Silver Beach sales office in the basement of Haliburton's Village Barn, Kowalski welcomed half a dozen Bell executives, County Warden Murray Fearrey, and one newspaper reporter. With his business partner Ben by his side, and his parents offering guests coffee and tidbits, Kowalski made the announcement he had been itching to make for half a year.

"We're excited because we think this is not only a good news story for our development, but also for the whole community," he said. "Silver Beach has started the ball rolling, and from here, hopefully, the ball will continue to roll."

With that, Jim Neubauer, Bell Canada's general manager for the Ontario East region, took the floor and launched into a shopping list of services set to come to Silver Beach, the framework of which could be laid as early as this fall.

"We're trying to think of everything possible that we can do to make this a 'convenience option' for those people moving in," says Neubauer. "These will be state-of-the-art telecommunications homes."

The condos, it's learned, will be pre-wired for telephone, high-speed Internet, and high-definition Bell ExpressVu satellite television. There will be jacks and outlets available in every room, and the buildings will also go the extra mile by having wireless Internet capabilities.

"If someone wants to go outside on a balcony and enjoy the beautiful view, then great, have wireless. But at the same time, if someone has a home office, then why not give them the chance to plug in while they're at the desk too," says Neubauer.

On top of that, each unit will have technology solutions for home theatre systems, and if a future owner

# Kashagawigamog development prompts Bell to take closer look at area's needs

*from page 25*

requests it, they will come pre-wired for speakers and stereo equipment - all in an effort to make the move to Silver Beach both seamless and orderly.

"We came up with the concept that we have to wire these homes for everything and anything, because today's nursery could be tomorrow's office," he said.

But perhaps what's most impressive about the plans for Silver Beach is how Kowalski managed to draw Bell's attention to an area that has gone relatively under-serviced until this point.

"This is a community that we've wanted to be in for a while, but haven't really been here fully. This project will allow us to pave the fibre highway so we can be here," says Neubauer.

"What we really needed was something to throw us over the top," he adds. "As you can imagine, we have numerous places in Eastern Ontario that we have to look at as far as expanding high-speed Internet...it's a long, long list. But it's when opportunities like this come along that we say, 'You know what, this is a real gem,' and the area gets moved to the top of the list because of the business opportunities present."

With the wheels already in motion, Neubauer isn't saying exactly how this will benefit the surrounding area but residents along Wigamog Road will certainly be some of the first to see new services available where they may not have existed before.

"Today we're talking about an exclusive Bell-Gerry partnership," says Neubauer. "We won't talk about the homes we're going to pass, we'll leave that for the 'New Year's splash' as to exactly where we'll go, but clearly this is

the four-lane highway that we need to get there."

And as much as Kowalski deserves credit for convincing Bell to take a second look at Haliburton, the raw potential of this community also helped build a strong case, which caught the eyes and ears of senior-level management.

Fearrey, who has watched the Silver Beach development progress over the past months, also expressed his excitement over the possibilities for both the Lake Kashagawigamog area, as well as Haliburton County as a whole. "I think it's tremendous. I think we have a first-class development here in Haliburton, and this just moves it up a step."

For the next few weeks the project will sit in waiting while Kowalski waits for draft plan approval for his development. Once that step is complete, Silver Beach will then officially open its sales office and begin working on selling off the first 22 condominium units, which will complete phase one of the three-year project.

If all goes according to plan, a model home could be underway as early as June, and the infrastructure could start this fall, including the development of roads, underground servicing, and perhaps the beginning of a few foundations. Silver Beach Trailer Park is set to remain open until mid-September but after that point the area will begin its facelift and Kowalski will see his dream finally start to take shape.

"It's a three-year plan on our part but the fact that Bell has embraced our plan so early on and so rapidly is great. By the time our first phase of homes is built they are going to have all the infrastructure in place, so there will be no lag time," he says.