

About Wireless Toronto

Wireless Toronto is a not-for-profit group dedicated to bringing no-fee wireless Internet access to Toronto. Our aim is to encourage the growth of wireless networking and to build community in interesting and innovative ways. We do this by setting up wireless Internet networks in cafés, restaurants and bars, as well as other locations in across the city.

As of January 2008, there are 38 Wireless Toronto nodes. They're in all kinds of public and publicly-accessible spaces: restaurants, cafés, bars, etc. Our largest node is at St. Lawrence Market—tenants and visitors to the market can get online for free from anywhere in and around the building. For a complete and up-to-date listing of our nodes, visit <http://wirelesstoronto.ca>.

Why would I want to be a Wireless Toronto node?

1 Your customers want wireless Internet access. More and more people are laptop owners, and want the flexibility to check their email or do online research in places besides home, work or school. Some freelancers and entrepreneurs work exclusively on-the-go in cafes and restaurants, because it's more convenient than having a dedicated office.

2 It's a competitive advantage. Big chains like Starbucks, McDonald's and the Second Cup are now offering for-pay wireless Internet access in their locations. To use these, customers must pay \$5 to \$10 per hour, in addition to their food or drink purchase. When people are deciding between a place that has free access and one that has pay access, they'll almost always choose to go to the one with free access.

3 It will attract new customers. Wireless Toronto's brochures, website, and window stickers will help you promote the wireless service, so that anyone who's looking for a place to go will know that they can find free wireless Internet at your location. If there are times during the day when seats are empty, offering free wireless access will help fill them.

4 It promotes community. Wireless Toronto's community portal pages give each wireless user information about your café or restaurant, as well as news, events and other information about your neighbourhood.

To become a node on the Wireless Toronto network, you need:

- a Wireless Toronto network membership (\$50/year)
- a compatible wireless router (about \$90—we can tell you where to find them cheaply, or provide one at cost)
- a business high-speed Internet access service, if you don't already have it (\$50-70/month—we can recommend some friendly local, independent Internet Service Providers)

Why is Wireless Toronto doing this?

We are an all-volunteer group who want to make wireless Internet available to more Torontonians. In cities like Montréal, Vancouver, San Francisco and New York, wireless Internet access is offered at a huge number of locations, and we feel Torontonians deserve the same. We do this because we want to promote the communities that make Toronto a great place to live, and because it's fun.



Your Wireless Toronto Network Membership Includes:

- 1 Setup of your wireless router
- 2 Monitoring of the wireless service, including software upgrades
- 3 Promotion of your venue in our brochures and on our website
- 4 Two window stickers
- 5 Your information on the community portal page: one photo, one logo, and a short text description

What is WiFi, exactly?

WiFi, also known as wireless networking, is a technology that allows people with laptop computers to connect to the Internet without wires. Places which offer WiFi Internet access are called “hotspots”. Hotspots typically cover small areas, such as the inside of a building, and they are powered by a wireless router, a small networking device which converts an Internet connection into radio signals.



Bringing WiFi to the masses



Ian Harvey, National Post

Published: Saturday, November 05, 2005

As opening shots go, it wasn't much of a salvo against the combined might of media giants Rogers Communications and Bell Canada.

But to the band of volunteers at non-profit Wireless Toronto, it was a cannon booming across St. Lawrence Market, as they rolled out their latest free hotspot in a wireless-fidelity network they hope will stitch together the city's diverse communities.

"It's about a connection to a space and your experience of that space. It enables a community," co-founder Gabe Sawhney says of the hotspots that allow users to gain free access to the Internet.

Since their launch in spring, Wireless Toronto's altruists have set up eight free hotspots, five of them linked through the Teriyaki Experience restaurant chain. But the St. Lawrence Market site is their largest and most ambitious community portal to date.

It's a foil to Rogers' and Bell's \$200-million joint investment in Inukshuk Internet Inc., which has plans to build and operate a pay-for-play network reaching more than two-thirds of Canadians over the next three years.

Sawhney's group, on the other hand, seeks businesses and institutions with an existing broadband connection and asks for an investment of \$70 for a wireless router and an annual \$50 "server fee," which pays for the technology overhead and creation of local portal pages. Wireless Toronto takes care of the rest, including securing the businesses' own Internet access against unwanted snooping.

Beyond the obvious appeal of being free, each of the community hotspots has a Web page where users arrive when logging on to the network. "It has information about events, discussion around local issues, maps, contact information, that kind of thing," Sawhney says. "There's also a competitive advantage in that a customer can go to a Second Cup or Starbucks and pay 15 cents a minute to get access [from a pay-for-play hotspot such as FatPort or Inukshuk], or they can come across to the independent coffee shop and get access for free from us."

Wireless Toronto sees these community Web pages as a virtual village newspaper, and the resultant dialogue as a modern version of a town-hall debate.

Access to WiFi in coffee houses, bars, restaurants, public spaces, schools and elsewhere is not just a way to entice customers to linger and spend; it's a way, proponents say, of anchoring a community whose citizens are stressed for time. And in the newspeak of the age, broadband access is ...

Make that a double latté with Internet topping

December, 2005

Wireless Toronto has helped several GTA restaurant proprietors set up free Internet access. It not only undercuts corporate gouging, but also creates an activist infrastructure. The lofty goal is strong local communities, but will people start to congregate?

by Nadia Chiesa

"Have you used the Internet?" asks Michael Pereira. Of course I've used the Internet, but the question is not actually as odd as it seems. Pereira is a volunteer with Wireless Toronto, a non-profit group dedicated to bringing free wireless Internet access to the city. We're sitting in the café at 401 Richmond, an arts and community centre in downtown Toronto. This café is the group's most recent "hotspot," and Pereira wants to know if I've tried out the free wireless yet.



I turn on my laptop and click on my web browser. The Wireless Toronto sign-in page pops up, instead of my usual homepage. I create a username and password, fill in my email address and that's it. I'm online, and all it cost was a \$1.25 cup of tea.

In Toronto, several cafés and restaurants offer wireless Internet access — for a price. Just across the street from 401 Richmond, at the Second Cup on the corner of

Richmond and Spadina, I can check my email for \$9 an hour. Or I can pop into Starbucks on the other side of the street, where it's only \$7.50 an hour.

Wireless Toronto has set up 10 free "hotspots" across the city since Gabe Sawhney founded it in April. The mission of this fledgling group is to provide free Internet access to build and strengthen communities. It's a great idea, ... <http://www.rj.ca/online/592/>





THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Building a wireless city

By BUFFY CHILDERHOSE
Saturday, October 8, 2005

The word "wireless" may conjure images of business travellers hunched over laptops in airports, but for Gabe Sawhney, wireless access is more than an instrument for industry. Mr. Sawhney is a member of Wireless Toronto, a group that wants the Internet to go both free-range and free. "Hot spots [wireless access points] are appearing throughout Toronto but neither as cheaply nor as quickly as in other cities," he said.

Wireless Toronto (<http://www.wirelesstoronto.ca>) is a volunteer-run group inspired by Montreal's *île Sans Fil*, which boasts 30 free hot spots in venues such as cafés and libraries. As with the Montreal project, Toronto hot-spot venues are providing the broadband connection, hardware and a \$50 annual fee for the group's volunteers to manage all the technical demands.

The first hot spot launched yesterday in the St. Lawrence Market complex. Not just a perk for the laptop set, Mr. Sawhney says his group's goal is to foster community, with hot spots hosting local content from event listings to art projects.

"We're trying to make tech more accessible. But this isn't just about technology -- it's about creating and cultivating public spaces."

NOW

Community Wi-Fi

Wireless fidelity co-ops are on the rise

(2005-11-03)

By JOSEPH WILSON



Photo by Steve Payne

A few weeks ago NOW ran a story about the absence of wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) community groups in Toronto.

It turns out that there are a few nascent groups just itching to provide wireless access for the masses...

A few weeks ago, another grassroots group, Wireless Toronto, had a triumphant kickoff at the St. Lawrence Market, the site of one of their first high-profile hot spots. The group is completely volunteer-run and offers its services to businesses and public-access spaces.

"This was a perfect fit for the Market," says community member and volunteer Edward Nixon. "The world of technology is often seen as an isolating world, and we want to bring it to the people in public spaces."

A router jammed behind a pipe on the upper level of the Market reveals the simplicity of the technology and the grassroots nature of the group.

"People think this technology is highly complicated," says volunteer Gabe Sawhney. "It's really quite simple. And cheap." The whole Market was wired up for less than \$1,000.

Currently, there are hot spots at the Centre for Social Innovation at 215 Spadina and a few Teriyaki Experience restaurants across the city. Others are in the works, such as a pilot project to get networked computers into a community housing project in Cabbagetown to aid tenants in learning new job skills and finding jobs.

Hanna Cho, a Master's student in communication and culture at York University, has been working closely with the group and monitoring its spread across the city. "We're interested in looking at alternative ways of providing access to communication," she says.

"This project is changing people's idea of this technology," she says. "It becomes more like having a library card or a necessary utility."

Cho wants to disabuse people of the notion that Wi-Fi is an upscale technology. Wireless Internet is seen on television as a perk only available to suits with the money for sweet laptops.

It's time to think of wireless as an important social resource. "We're just a bunch of happy nerds who are willing to devote our time to this," says Sawhney.

 http://www.nowtoronto.com/issues/2005-11-03/goods_next.php

