

Navigating the Squeeze



A Guide to Cutting Technology Costs for Alberta's
Small and Medium Sized Businesses.

The Landscape for Alberta's SMBs is a Tough One.

You're caught in a strategic squeeze, facing relentless cost pressures, a strained labour market, and an uncertain economic environment. In fact, rising operational costs are now the single most dominant challenge for businesses in our province.

But what if your technology could be transformed from a cost center into a strategic asset that protects your bottom line and drives growth?

This guide was written for you. In the following pages, we'll uncover the most common hidden technology expenses that are draining your resources and show you clear, actionable steps you can take to cut costs, improve productivity, and turn your technology into a true competitive advantage.



The Hidden Costs of Your Internet and Phone

In a tough economic climate, every dollar counts. Yet many businesses are unknowingly losing hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars each month to opaque and inefficient telecom billing. The traditional model offered by incumbent providers in Alberta is notorious for its lack of transparency and poor service, which directly impacts your bottom line.

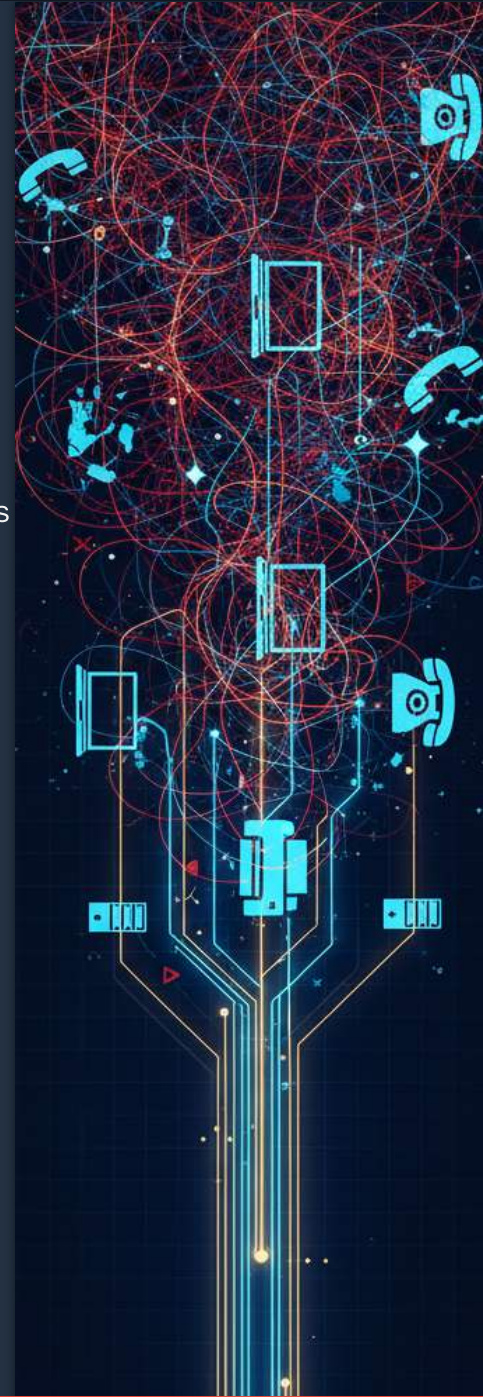
Are you paying for any of these hidden costs ?

- **A "Waived" or " Low Fee" Installation:** Many providers offer a "no-charge" or low installation fee, but bake the true cost of the hardware into your monthly "per-device" fee, forcing you to pay for it over and over again as their profits from their initial work compounds.
- **Super Confusing Invoices:** Telecom bills are often filled with cryptic line items and confusing charges, making it nearly impossible to know what you're actually paying for. Here you have two choices: lose money and you pay too much because you don't understand your bill or lose money waiting on hold forever to get clarification.
- **Services You Don't Need:** Because Corporate Telecoms in Alberta don't do business assessments and don't seek to understand your business, Many SMB's overpay for internet speeds they literally never experience due hardware limitation or don't need because of the nature of their business. The same holds true for Business Phone Systems.
- **The Massive Cost of Downtime:** Every minute your internet is down costs your business money in lost productivity and unresponsive customer service. That cost multiplies when you have to wait hours on hold in chat or on the phone so that you can speak to outsourced unempowered and unresponsive support.
- **The Cost of Not Bundling:** By treating your telecom and IT as separate expenses, you're missing out on the massive savings that come from a bundled approach, often costing your business tens of thousands of dollars in potential savings every year.

These aren't just minor annoyances; they are significant, hidden expenses that drain your resources and prevent you from investing in growth.

The Hidden Costs of an IT Provider or Managed Service Provider

- **The Cost of Lost Productivity:** How much money is your business losing every time your team is hampered by slow computers or recurring software glitches?
- **The Cost of Wasted Time:** How many hours do your employees waste dealing with a slow or unresponsive helpdesk?
- **The Cost of "Finger-Pointing" & Vendor Overload:** When your internet is slow, your phone system acts up, or your printer stops working, who do you call? If your IT provider doesn't have insight or control over these critical systems, you're left juggling multiple vendors, endless support calls, and frustrating finger-pointing—wasting valuable time and money
- **The Cost of Not Bundling:** If your IT provider can't consolidate your telecom and IT spending, you're missing out on the massive savings of a bundled approach, often costing your business tens of thousands of dollars in potential savings every year.
- **The Opportunity Cost of Poor Planning:** Without a strategic partner to vet your technology, you could be wasting thousands on redundant or ineffective software.
- **The Opportunity Cost of Not Innovating:** What is it costing you to not be using modern tools like AI and Automation to make your team more efficient than your competitors? In the next 10 years, finding ways to reduce costs and boost productivity through technology innovation will be critical for SMBs. This is the core of our "Innovate" phase.



If your current IT provider only sees part of the picture, their ability to truly Optimize and Innovate is fundamentally limited. This limitation is why Next Step "Technology Solutions Provider" exists. It's time to stop treating technology as a simple cost center and see it for what it is: the single most important factor that will determine not just your growth, but your Business's survival over the next decade.

In Today's AI-Powered Threat Landscape, "Good Enough" Security Is No Security at All.

We understand managing day-to-day operational costs is top of mind for Your SMB, but there's one area where cutting corners can lead to catastrophic financial losses: cybersecurity. While many Canadian small businesses have experienced a cyber incident, a dangerous "preparedness gap" exists, with fewer than half believing they are vulnerable to an attack

- **The Cost of a Damaged Reputation:** A security incident erodes the trust you've built with your customers. This often results in increased customer dissatisfaction, spiraling retention, and makes acquiring new customers significantly more difficult.
- **The Cost of a Data Breach:** A single breach can lead to hefty regulatory fines, legal fees, and settlement costs that can easily damage an SMB's financial stability.
- **The Cost of Downtime:** Recovering from a ransomware attack involves forensics, system rebuilds, and prolonged periods of operational paralysis. These recovery costs almost always exceed any "savings" from using basic, inadequate security.
- **The Cost of Unmeasured Risk:** Without a proper Risk Management assessment, you're making critical business decisions in the dark. You can't know if you're overspending or underspending on security and insurance, and you lack a clear plan for disaster recovery, which can lead to panicked, expensive decisions in a crisis.
- **The Hidden Costs of Traditional Cybersecurity:** Today, most SMBs are forced into one of two flawed and expensive models:
 - **Buying "À La Carte":** You buy individual security tools from your IT provider, but you're left wondering if you have gaps in your protection because they lack the capacity or expertise to offer a truly comprehensive solution.
 - **Adding Another Vendor:** You buy a comprehensive "Cybersecurity as a Service" (CSaaS) package from a Cybersecurity Provider, but now you have yet another vendor to manage, creating the same finger-pointing and slowdowns you're trying to escape.

These aren't just technical issues; they are the hidden financial liabilities that can dismantle the business you've worked so hard to build.

Let's End the Squeeze and Unlock Your Growth Together

For too long, Alberta's SMBs have been forced to juggle unresponsive telecoms, limited IT providers, and complex cybersecurity threats on their own. This fragmented and reactive approach is the true source of your technology stress and a hidden drain on your bottom line. **Next Step was founded to fix this broken model.**

With Next Step You Get:

- **Significant Cost Savings:** On average, our clients see a 15%-30% reduction in their total technology spending by eliminating duplicate payments, hidden costs and bundling services with Next Step.
- **Clarity and Control:** One simple, consolidated bill for all your technology, eliminating confusing invoices and finger-pointing between vendors.
- **Peace of Mind:** Comprehensive Enterprise-grade cybersecurity is included , not sold as an expensive add-on.
- **Maximum Productivity and Uptime:** We optimize your entire technology stack for peak performance and reliability. This includes:
 - **Stable IT:** An IT environment that simply works.
 - **Stable Networks:** The right internet speed with a strategy for "five-nines" (99.999%) uptime.
 - **Stable Communication:** An enterprise-grade phone system with all the modern features needed to serve your customers professionally.
- **A Strategic Partner Who Drives Growth:** We provide the C-level guidance and innovative technology solutions that directly increase revenue, boost profitability, and improve your team's quality of work life.



Turn Your Technology Into a Competitive Advantage.

Transformation in 3-Simple Steps:

Your Path to Technology Driven Growth

STEP 1

Schedule your Free Technology Assessment

We'll start with a simple conversation to identify your biggest frustrations and opportunities for savings.

STEP 2

Get a Customized Plan

We'll provide a clear, Tech Jargon-free plan that outlines a technology strategy to reduce your costs, increase productivity, and drive business growth.

STEP 3

Eliminate Tech Stress for Good

We'll execute the plan, becoming your single point of contact so you can focus on growing your business.

Request your free, no-obligation Technology Assessment today. We will conduct a thorough analysis of your current technology stack—from your internet and phone bills to your IT and security posture—to uncover immediate cost savings and create a clear, actionable plan to leverage technology to achieve your business goals.

Ready to Experience the Difference?

Request your free, no-obligation Tech Analysis today.



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TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS PROVIDER