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Feds kicking in \$500 million for rural broadband

Continued from page 1

It's tremendous news because what we've been advocating at FCM is exactly that, said Somerville. For us here, I think the biggest thing we'll have to see is how this is going to shake out.

It's a real economic development. People think it's for Netflix and streaming, it's not. (These days) it's used for health and education. For business, we really need to make sure we have the high-speed Internet everywhere.

It has been the biggest issue I have been asked about everywhere across the country, added Somerville.

While fairly well-connected, Halton Hills is home to a few areas that contribute to the roughly two million Canadian households (18 per cent) the CRTC says lacks basic high-speed service.

Our topography in our area really does make it a challenge. We have the escarpment and that's really what affects us from using wireless, said Somerville.

In its ruling, the CRTC directed internet service providers (ISPs) to begin planning to increase both service and speeds in more iso-

lated, rural areas across the country.

The new targets laid out by the CRTC include basic download speeds of at least 50 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of at least 10 Mbps. ISPs will also be required to offer customers the option of unlimited bandwidth packages.

The ultimate goal is to reduce the number of households lacking high-speed service to 10 per cent from 18 by 2021, and down to zero in 10-15 years.

The plan requires ISPs to pay into a fund to collect \$750 million over the next five years to pay for the required infrastructure upgrades.

The CRTC did not place any provisions on price controls, however, during his press conference, CRTC chair Jean-Pierre Blais, said it is prepared to intervene should costs become prohibitive for customers.

The commission's approach to affordability has always been through market forces, to make sure we have enough competitors. We have informed consumers that are working in a dynamic marketplace, he said. If that step does not work, then we'll intervene with a regulatory process.

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