

# Jeff Lumby's view from the country

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## Beam me up and down, Scotty!

If you're one of the many Canadians who find that you constantly have too much money sitting around, I have the solution. Move to the country. Yes, rural life will instantly remove the burden of having to deal with excess cash. If you're not installing septic systems and wells, you're setting up pond fountains or re-gravelling the lane... 283 metric tonnes to be exact. That's eight, tri-axel belly hoppers if you're using the old system. I guess I have to consider myself one of the lucky ones because I don't have a surplus of coin to deal with.

We moved to the country shortly after the federal liberals promised that within the next two years or really soon, whichever came first, every rural Canadian would be receiving high-speed internet service. In all my stupidity, or confidence in our elected officials, I took that to mean all rural Canadians would soon be wired with fibre-optic cable. Not even close. Now in fairness to the liberals, at the time, they were deeply committed to a project involving some marketing agencies in Quebec, so it's unfair to be critical. Loosely translated what that really meant was, high-speed internet service was going to be available to all rural Canadians who would otherwise be setting fire to their money. Hey, some of the greatest golf courses in the world are public tracks, if you have the \$275.00 to play a round.

I certainly don't consider myself in that group but I was able to scrape together the necessary funds to purchase Bell Express Vu's Direct PC satellite high-speed. I run a business out of my home so I had to have it. The downside was that Direct PC was a download only high-speed set up. That meant that a phone modem had to be employed for all uploads. So you either had to purchase two phone lines or have one line doing double duty. Why upload only you ask? I was told by Direct PC techie that it was a military issue. Right, and Al Gore invented the internet. This system didn't come cheap either. There were modem and installation costs that hovered around \$300.00, if memory serves.

Just after a year of service, I get a let-

ter from Bell. We regret to announce the discontinuation of our Direct PC program. No rebate, no buy-back of their expensive hardware, nothing. Nothing except a referral to another service, with links to Bell. This one is called Anikast. It's connected to Telesat. At first glance, Anikast is clearly a superior system to Direct PC. First of all, this satellite service is two way high-speed, which means two things for me. A, it doesn't require a phone line so I can be online and the phone at the same time and, B, it won't take me a half-hour to upload a 30 second MP3. Now, how 'bout the cost? Surely for inconveniencing so many Direct PC customers, Bell will eat a chunk of the cost, right? Ah, not so fast. Here's the skinny on Anikast for Direct PC users. "Your ANIKAST equipment package is available for one-time purchase or with financing over four or 24 months. Purchase cost is \$499.00". (Nice sentence structure.) The installation is another \$99.00 and we haven't even touched the monthly bills. Anikast has 4 monthly packages ranging in price from \$54.95 to \$139.95 depending on speed and you have to sign up for at least a year. Yikes! I feel like I've just gone a couple of rounds with an angry Mike Tyson.

There were more surprises. When Tom and Rob from Rockwood TV came out to install the dish, we discovered that a large Ash tree was obstructing the only attachment point on the roof of the house. Now I'm faced with either dropping the Ash or digging a post-hole in another location. I

didn't want to lose the Ash so I dug the hole. I guess that makes me an Ash hole. Let's put it this way, I didn't expect that my quest for two-way, high-speed internet service would include the purchase of a 6 X 6 and four bags of cement. I don't know about you but my greeting from the guys at Leathertown Lumber is, "what now Jeff?"

Anyway, I'm 90% there. The only additional out-of-pocket expenses are for the IT guy who'll be coming out to make the computer connections and the door and window guy who'll be repairing the broken window that the modem went through the first time it screws up.



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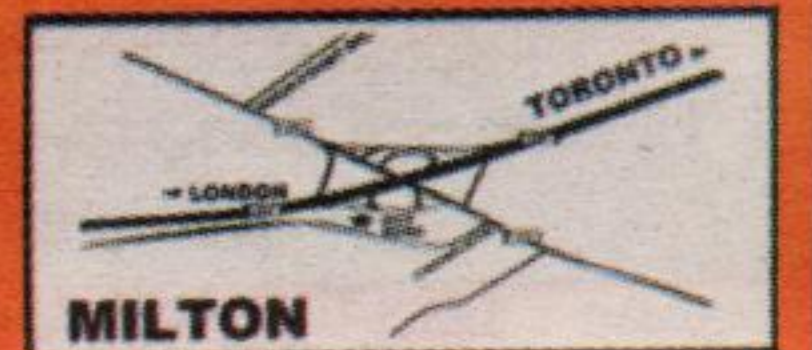
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