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Dial-up slows up rural business

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underserved rural regions in southern Ontario."

In March of last year, the province announced the \$30-million, four-year initiative, which has so far dolled out more than \$8 million to 15 municipalities including Simcoe County and the City of Kawartha Lakes.

But before Whitchurch-Stouffville applies to the program, it wants to ensure there truly is a need for high-speed access within the rural parts of town.

Which is why the municipality has created an online survey for residents to fill out.

"We're not trying to raise anyone's expectations," Rebecca Mustard, Whitchurch-Stouffville's economic development officer said. "Is it just talk there are areas without high-speed Internet?"

There are approximately 12,000 rural residents. Some are blocked from getting high-speed service because they are in low areas or their homes are blocked by trees.

The municipality defines high-speed Internet access as a download speed no slower than 1.5 mbps.

An example of how quick 1.5 mbps is versus dial-up? An average web page takes 0.39 seconds to load via a 1.5 mbps high-speed connection. With a dial-up connection, which runs between 40 and 50 kbps, that same web page takes about seven seconds.

"It's pretty significant if you are reliant (on the Internet) to conduct your business," Mr. Ferdinands said. "The lack of high-speed impedes the size of file you can exchange."

The slow Internet connection has also affected house sales.

"I have heard people said 'I can't move into this house because we're not able to access high-speed,'" Mr. Ferdinands said. "It's certainly a factor in the decision to buy."

As the councillor and resident of a rural ward, Mr. Ferdinands is among those forced to use dial-up whenever he wants to use the Internet.

Not happy with its speed, and in an attempt to find an

alternative solution for himself and his constituents, Mr. Ferdinands explored options offered by Zing-Net, Xplornet and Rogers, which has introduced a stick that enables users to connect wirelessly to the Internet.

While the stick provides a much quicker Internet connection compared to dial-up, it does come with a few problems.

"It's like a cellphone — you enter into a long-term contract and it's a user-fee based system," Mr. Ferdinands said, adding it is also very easy to inadvertently remain connected and "you get a bill larger than your mortgage".

To participate in the town's high-speed Internet survey, go to townofws.com to fill out the survey. Residents can also contact the town by calling 905-640-1910 ext. 506 or by e-mailing wskingconnects@bellnet.ca. In the latter two options, residents must provide their civic address and reason why high-speed Internet access is not available to them.

The survey concludes May 15.

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Spring has arrived and we will be starting the cottage commute, as well as out and about more to enjoy nicer weather. These days, our roads and highways have ruts and pot holes large enough to loose your mother-in-law. All joking aside, these road conditions cause serious wear on shocks and struts. Shocks and struts life span are about 80,000 km. These units have a drastic affect on vehicle operation. Weak shocks and struts can cause premature brake wear, warped brake rotors, excessive tire wear, steering and suspension part failure. We realize that your automobile expenses are the second largest yearly outlay of capital other than your home. So this month's special WILL SAVE YOU MONEY. Call us for your appointment to inspect your shocks and struts, front-end and brakes FREE. If our inspection and tests reveal strut or shock replacement is necessary, we will sell you quality Monroe shocks or struts at OUR COST plus installation. That's right, our cost, no mark-up, 0% profit on the shocks or struts.

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P.S. — Hope everyone has a wonderful Spring!

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