

Dial-up Internet only option for some rural residents

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infrastructure and the numerous natural limitations for servicing, which include line of site.

"All of this comes down to an economic case," said Whitchurch-Stouffville Councillor Ken Ferdinands. "The costs are just astronomical now."

Which is why Mr. Ferdinands thinks it's time for the federal government to step in.

"I think the federal government is starting to recognize they need to develop a national broadband strategy because we are falling behind," he said.

And it appears the government may be headed in that direction as Industry Canada has recently announced a funding program for broadband infrastructure.

However, before any money is handed out, it is conducting an extensive mapping exercise in order to understand the extent to which Canadians remain under-served or unserved.

Results from the WS King Connects Broadband Study

have already been submitted to Industry Canada.

Industry Canada is not, however, Whitchurch-Stouffville and King Township's only option.

There is the potential for more funding through the province's Rural Connections program, which provides one-third of the funding for project costs, up to \$1 million, with the remaining two-thirds typically being paid for by the ISP.

'There are people who believe a fast Internet connection is an essential service; it's as indispensable as hydro.'

Ken Ferdinands
Whitchurch-Stouffville councillor

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.

Yet another option for the two municipalities is wait-

ing for the ISPs to build their infrastructure — when they see fit.

"If the ISPs get to bid on areas, they will bid on the easiest or cheapest to service," Ms Mustard said of why this is the least attractive option.

There are approximately 12,000 rural residents in Whitchurch-Stouffville. Some cannot get high-speed Internet service because they are in low lying areas or their homes are blocked by trees. If these residents wish to connect to the World Wide Web, they have to use dial-up.

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

The average web page takes 0.39 seconds to load via a 1.5 mbps connection. With a dial-up connection, which runs between 40 and 50 kbps, that same web page will take about seven seconds.

"It's pretty significant if you are reliant (on the Internet) to conduct your business," Mr. Ferdinands said.

However, even the standard of 1.5 mbps is "seen as a substandard standard. But that would be seen as a great leap forward for people suf-

fering with eight kbps," he said. "There are people who believe a fast Internet connection is an essential service; it's as indispensable as hydro."

The town has no time line for when it will be notified about the Industry Canada fund and another round of Rural Connections funding has yet to be announced.

SEND MONEY

► Since 2007, Ontario has committed \$70 million to upgrade or build broadband infrastructure in rural and remote communities in southern and northern Ontario. Local councillors want more of that money to help Internet users in Whitchurch-Stouffville and King.

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10 ways to save energy

For homeowners:

- improve home insulation
- get rid of the energy-guzzling beer fridge
- use a thermal blanket on the pool

For kids:

- turn off televisions, computers and game consoles when done using them
- turn off the lights when you leave the room

For travellers

- put indoor and outdoor lights on timers when away
- put water heater on vacation mode (if available)

For employees

- use standby mode for copiers and computers
- turn all equipment off at the end of the day
- dim/turn off lights near windows in the daytime.

Source: www.countmeinontario.ca/the-100-ways-to-conserve/index.aspx

Blackout anniversary marked by challenge

Town takes part but won't count

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

Whitchurch-Stouffville residents are being asked to reduce their energy consumption on Friday, Aug. 14, and that includes municipal facilities.

It just won't be part of an Ontario-wide contest.

Almost 80 communities representing 56 per cent of the province's population have already committed to reducing their energy usage that day by signing up for the Count Me In! Challenge Day.

Aug. 14 is the anniversary of the North American blackout in 2003.

Whitchurch-Stouffville has committed to take part.

"We are very conscious of the energy we use and we want our residents to save energy

everyday, not just on a special day," said Mayor Wayne Emmerson.

There are two different challenges in which municipalities can participate. One is the highest percentage drop in electricity consumption between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Aug. 14, as measured by the Independent Electricity System Operator.

The other challenge is the highest per capita participation pledge drive.

Whitchurch-Stouffville has opted to not participate in either challenge.

"We don't want to be a part of these challenges to see who can save the most power," Mr. Emmerson said. "Who cares who wins or loses? We all win by saving energy."

The Count Me In! Community Challenge Day is an off-shoot of the Blackout Day Challenge developed by the City of Woodstock.

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