

High-speed internet coming to rural King Township

By Jake Courtepatte

Rural residents of King will soon be surfing the internet at blazing speeds.

Municipal and government officials gathered on Monday at the Township of King municipal offices to announce the King Township Fibre Optic Broadband Expansion project.

Deb Schulte, MP for King-Vaughan; Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham; Ontario Minister of Infrastructure, Brian McCullagh; Director of Business Development at Vianet, Glenn Grubb, President of Comcentric Networking Inc., and Steve Pellegrini, Mayor of King Township, announced over \$2.53 million in federal and provincial funding for two projects that will provide internet service to residents and businesses located in rural areas in King Township and surrounding subdivisions, and in Huron County. King will receive more than \$1.68 million.

"The Government of Canada is committed to investing in infrastructure that strengthens the middle class, promotes economic prosperity and provides municipalities with the building blocks they need to support a high standard of living for Canadians and their families," said Schulte. "Access to better, more reliable broadband connections will provide King Township and Huron County residents and businesses with new opportunities to participate in the digital economy and to take advantage of advances in telehealth, e-learning and remote access to government services."

King will receive \$825,000 for the project from the Government of Canada, with the provincial government matching the amount. Communications company Vianet, who will be responsible for providing the service to residents, will contribute the remainder of the project costs.

"Vianet is extremely excited to be involved in this wonderful opportunity," said Will Gasteiger, president of Vianet. "As the digital age explodes with new applications and ever increasing bandwidth demands, the only practical long term investment for connectivity to rural areas is fibre optic infrastructure. We thank the mayor of King Township and council for supporting this vision and the governments of Canada and Ontario for providing the funding to bring it to fruition. Building fibre optic networks in rural areas is costly and complex, but with governments, companies and end users all contributing, the broadband gap between rural and urban Canada will be overcome. Vianet looks forward to doing its part."

With an office on Highway 9 in Schomberg, Vianet has been offering full service communications based out of Sudbury since 1995 and has built more internet access to Northern Ontario's rural communities ever since. Vianet's business director, Brian McCullagh, said it was Ontario's rural communities that benefitted the most when the CRTC declared broadband internet a "basic communications service" in December.

"We see a continued build of fibre optic cable over the coming years to get fibre to every home," McCullagh said. "The first thing you have to do is connect that community to a main trunk line that can connect into the bigger centres and get that bandwidth out there."

The funding is being provided through the Small Communities Fund, which supports priority infrastructure projects in communities with less than 100,000 residents.

More information on the project will become available as it unfolds.