

## Vianet well positioned to serve King residents

By Mark Pavilons

A commitment by government and strategic private partnerships are making progress in providing residents with high-speed Internet access.

Vianet, with a facility in King, has made a major investment in the future.

Vianet is one of those strategic partners and recently received funding approval through the provincial government's Small Communities Infrastructure Program. The joint federal-provincial funding will see \$1.68 million earmarked for upgrades in King Township and some streets in Simcoe County.

Brian McCullagh, director of business development for Vianet, said they're already moving ahead. The company is in the engineering stages at the moment and engineers are out in the field. They're applying for various permits and awaiting municipal and regional approvals.

Vianet's talks with King Township to date have been positive and King knows full well the importance of providing broadband access to its residents and businesses.

Vianet built a high-capacity fibre backbone that runs from Vaughan to Barrie, connected to the major hub in Toronto. Through the purchase of Zing in 2014, Vianet has brought fibre to various towers along that route to increase capacity on their wireless network. Now, with the new funding and plans for the future, Vianet is branching out.

The current project involves servicing homes along Jane Street, running east to Snowball and west through Carrying Place stopping at Tecumseth Pines. They will be connecting to unserved streets and subdivisions in the area, ultimately serving some 1,000 residents.

McCullagh pointed out it's very costly, especially in rural areas, and homeowners will have to kick in some money.

The goal is to expand Vianet's network and provide rural homes with quality fibre optics.

The needs for increased bandwidths, McCullagh observed, are growing steadily. The reality is fibre infrastructure is the key conduit and that's the company's focus.

It takes time, he said, but he sees high-speed, two-way streaming as the future. Smart systems in hospitals, including the one planned at Mackenzie Health, are all inter-connected, providing an amazing level of communications.

Canada, McCullagh pointed out, has fallen a bit behind its global competitors in its level of Internet service.

Government commitment, and projects such as this will help us catch up and allow Canadian companies to be more competitive.

This will permanently close the broadband gap and bolster local home-based business. It gives a competitive advantage to King," he added.

Vianet will receive \$825,000 for the project from the Government of Canada, with the provincial government matching the amount. Vianet 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.

As one of Ontario's few facilities-based telecom providers, Vianet has the ability to offer high performance network solutions over its own fibre optic and wireless networks. Additionally, they have created strategic relationships with other fibre optic carriers to offer services where Vianet does not have its own infrastructure.