

Progress being made in improving internet services

By Mark Pavilons

Efforts by YorkNET and leading internet providers are helping to improve underserved areas of King Township.

Securing broadband services to all of King has been a goal of local politicians and while it's been a slow process at times, there has been significant progress.

Township staff provided King councillors with an update recently, which noted that pockets of King are being connected, thanks to efforts by YorkNET and companies like Vianet, Bell and Rogers.

YorkNET's mandate is to ensure connectivity of regional departments to make service delivery more efficient. They hope to help provide dark fiber to municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals in the region. YorkNET is working with Vianet and hopes to explore collaborate projects with Bell and Rogers.

Vianet is a Sudbury-based company providing high-speed internet, TV and phone services. They've been in business since 1988. In 2014, Vianet acquired King-based Zing Networks, a fixed wireless provider based in Schomberg. Since then, they've been upgrading their network to increase speeds and reliability in King.

To date, Vianet has built more than 130 kilometres of fiber in King and surrounding areas, at a cost of roughly \$10 million. This now serves roughly 1,500 formerly under-served homes, farms and businesses.

November of 2017 saw the first connection of the King Township Fibre Optic Broadband Expansion project, the beginning of a rural fibre optic build. It was boosted by federal and provincial funding through the Small Communities Fund.

Vianet is also expanding in Schomberg to serve residents, in partnership with YorkNET. This cooperative approach will help connect the Schomberg Library, Community Hall, parks depot, Trisan Centre and Schomberg fire hall.

King's municipal centre hosts the POP site connecting Vianet and YorkNET to help serve municipal buildings. In return, Vianet has provided the Township with a redundant internet connection as well as dark fibre connectivity to the King Heritage and Cultural Centre.

Bell launched their Fibre to the Home project in King in 2018 to help residents and businesses within Nobleton, Schomberg and King City. Since then, 3,700 homes and businesses qualify for FTTH service. This year, Bell plans to add another 1,525 properties.

Bell launched Wireless to the Home for some 1,000 line-of-sight homes. Once completed the WTTN network will connect an addition 2,500 homes.

Rogers, in 2018, launched its 1.2GHz uplift project, which helped speed up a significant portion of customers in Nobleton and King City. The goal is to bring fibre deeper into the neighbourhoods, eliminating parts of the existing coaxial network. This new network is called a hybrid fiber-coaxial.

The Township works with providers through municipal access agreements to help speed things along.

This helps build a solid working relationship between the Township and telecommunication providers and helps expedite the process, keeping telecommunication companies busy improving service within King, staff observed.

The MPs and MPPs serving King, along with senior levels of government, will continue to advocate for broadband and telecommunications improvements.

The Province is investing \$315 million over five years on expanded access for under-served communities. The government is encouraging innovative partnerships with providers. King may have access to some of this funding, but application details have yet to be released.

Access to broadband connectivity is essential and it's critical that King continues to support its partners, with the ultimate goal being providing internet access to every household and business.

There is no single solution at the moment and it will require a range of approaches over the coming years.

All Township departments are striving to support partnerships that advance broadband access.