

Wait for internet upgrade frustrates Mono council

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Most people unhappy with a service provider simply find another provider of that service.

And something of that nature may happen in Mono regarding the installation of high-speed internet service.

Stephanie Maggs asked Mono council during its Sept. 10 meeting for an update on the installation of Rogers Communications high-speed fibre optic internet service along Hockley Road.

Mayor John Creelman said he's had extensive communications with Rogers.

?It is moving along, albeit at a very slow pace,? he said.

The issue of high-speed internet's progress in Mono was a topic of discussion at council's meeting in late August.

At that meeting, Mono resident Anthony Hosein asked for any information about progress toward expanding high-speed internet to more neighbourhoods in the town.

Previous to that meeting, Hosein broached the subject during a town council meeting in May.

It was announced in July 2022 that Rogers Communications hoped to bring high-speed internet to homes in Mono. More than 315 kilometres of fibre was to stitch at least 1,609 homes to a network of faster internet service.

Underserved homes and businesses were to be able to avail of high-speed internet by the first quarter of 2023. The service was touted as having no data cap to allow for 100 per cent unlimited service.

Creelman said during the council's Sept. 10 meeting that word of residents' concern made it to Rogers officials who reached out to Creelman. The mayor said those officials tried to assuage concerns about the work's progress.

Creelman said he's reached out to Bell Canada about resolving a problem at his household regarding their digital subscriber line (DSL) internet service. The same day he wrote to the company, Creelman said he received replies from the BCE president and vice president. Within minutes of their replies, Creelman was contacted by an official ready to assist him.

He also took the opportunity to speak with the Bell official about the company's current tower capacity and their ability to service high-speed wireless in Mono.

?Because, at the present time, it's the only possibility until such time as fibre is finally laid,? he said.

Bell Canada has contacted the municipality about possibly improving the capacity and speed of their wireless internet service to the town, he said.

?Can we not sign another contract?? Councillor Elaine Capes said. ?Are we exclusive to Rogers??

?There's no contract with Rogers,? Creelman said.

Put simply, Rogers Communications applied for money from the federal and provincial governments to expand wireless internet. Their application was successful.

?That's why they are working in Mono,? Creelman said. ?If somebody else wants to work in Mono, we're not going to stop them.?

But he isn't certain if more government money can be availed of by another service provider.

Matt Doner, the town's public works director, said he's aware of some issues with the permitting process that may have delayed Rogers contractors working in the area.

?Rogers and its contractor have told us that, when they make a permit application to the Town of Mono, we do a very rapid turnaround,? Creelman said. ?And, in fact, usually so fast they aren't picking them up as quickly as maybe they could.?

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority takes the complete allotted time to award permits, Creelman said. That permit process timeframe is 30 days.

?NVCA is taking the full 30 days and it is slowing down the installation,? he said.

Coun. Ralph Manktelow said he's disappointed in the pace of progress thus far. When he campaigned in the municipal election, high-speed internet was one of the issues he discussed with voters.

?I feel vulnerable on the issue because I went out and promised a lot to many people and it's been a lot slower than I anticipated,? Creelman said.

?They (Rogers Communications) got federal funding, who is keeping them accountable to what they said they were going to deliver?? Capes said. ?So who should we be actually contacting?

?It's not good to go to Rogers because they're just going to do what they're going to do.?

Creelman said provincial Infrastructure Minister Kinga Surma is interested in hearing from municipalities frustrated with the delays in implementing high-speed internet from Rogers.

?We can certainly follow up,? he said. ?I'm feeling optimistic about the Bell approach because of the turnaround time that I've gotten on their emails.?