

## Third-party towers eyed as key to high-speed Internet in Mono

The possibility of residents of Mono receiving high-speed Internet services might be closer to the horizon than was originally thought.

At last week's council meeting, Dan Gibbons, a representative of Shared Network Canada, presented council members with some possible locations to erect wireless high-speed Internet towers, which could then be rented out to any interested Internet providers.

Shared Network Canada (SNC) is a new company, created in October 2014, and comprised exclusively of people who have worked in the consulting field for telecommunication providers for towers.

"In America, approximately 90-95 percent of communication towers that currently exist are owned by third-party companies like us," explained Mr. Gibbons. "In Canada, over 90 percent of towers are owned by communication carriers. This has created a situation where companies pitch towers to communities one at a time, and each company has their own towers, causing much redundancy in service, lack of options, or dead space."

The company's model aims at creating a number of third-party towers throughout Ontario, which could then be leased to any service provider that wants to provide any form of radio services, including communication, public safety and Internet.

According to Mr. Gibbons, utilizing a third-party company, such as SNC, opens up the possibility not just for total coverage, but for a much larger variety of service providers through the leasing option.

"We like to design our network around the service providers' requirements, because they are the ones that make up the bulk of our revenue for our service," he said. "We also see some of the smaller businesses like Xplornet, who would love to provide for rural areas like this, but are often prevented due to the high costs of implementing their own towers or rental costs from companies like Bell and Rogers."

The discussion surrounding the implementation of high-speed Internet in Mono has come up quite frequently over the past year, and has often ended with the conclusion that the current options would either cost too much to the residents, or would still be unable to provide town-wide coverage.

One benefit to allowing SNC to erect their towers, would be that the development, maintenance, and removal (should no communications companies become interested in renting), is done at cost to SNC, rather than the town.

"If there came an instance where we had to decommission the towers, it is all our responsibility," said Mr. Gibbons. "We don't typically remove the entire foundation, but we remove the rest of the equipment."

He also stated that they take care of the roadways and necessary requirements for the service providers to pursue any maintenance of the towers.

Through mapping the area, SNC was able to look at the existing Internet levels throughout the town and identified various gaps in current coverage. He added that because of the layout of the town, between the current provider tower gaps, the cost of bringing in a fixed line Internet, such as a fibre line, would never be a cost effective path.

"In rural areas, it becomes very expensive to look at implementing any form of fixed Internet," he explained. "Wireless is the only option. We plan our towers strategically, rather than waiting for a network to show up, which will allow us to provide more services to the town."

He added that another benefit to pursuing the implementation of the towers through SNC is that the town would have the opportunity to be more involved in what kind of 'product' their residents would be receiving.

?When we plan in advance like this, it allows the town to be more involved in the decision making process of who they want to provide services to, and what kind of services are provided,? he said. ?We lease the space to build the tower, and this doesn't cost the Town. It's our risk to build it, and it's our risk if they choose not to come.?

One concern Deputy Mayor Ken McGhee brought up was the appearance of the towers.

?We would be interested to see what your towers look like, as we are very concerned about our environment,? said Deputy Mayor McGhee. ?As a member of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, one of the main concerns around the approval of towers is their visual impact.?

Mr. Gibbons was able to reassure council that SNC has done their research into the kinds of towers the NEC likes to see.

?In dealing with the NEC, we know they prefer to have taller, skinnier towers,? he said. ?But, we can basically design any tower the town would like, so long as it remains within the revenue or costs we are dealing with.?

The initial proposal includes three sites, with a tower to be installed at the town works yard, the municipal dump on the Third Line EHS and at the corner of 10 Sideroad and Mono-Amaranth Townline.