

Stay connected with family and business with YourLink Inc.

By Vivian Nemish

Rural Saskatchewan residents are quickly learning the importance of modern technology in order to remain connected with friends and family around the globe. Rural businesses are required to have high speed Internet connection in order to remain current and competitive in today's growing market. Many rural residents are recognizing that a dial-up connection is a major barrier to utilizing the tools and information available online. Accessing this form of communication technology in rural areas of Saskatchewan can be challenging.

YourLink Inc., a subsidiary of Vecima Networks Inc. formerly VCOM Inc., is Saskatchewan's largest rural wireless high speed Internet service provider.

The locally owned and operated business is based out of Saskatoon and has recently opened a new customer service centre there. This centre is fully staffed and provides technical support to YourLink's internet and television subscribers.

YourLink Inc. has increased its access points (broadcast points) 33 percent since the fall of 2006 bringing the number of access points to over 130.

"YourLink Inc. has invested between one-half and three-quarters of a million dollars into infrastructure enhancement this year," explains Mark

Richardson, general manager. "We are committed to quality service and have made the investment because we are in this business for the long haul."

YourLink Inc. signed a three-year service agreement in May 2006 with Agricore United to provide high speed Internet to all of its facilities in Saskatchewan. Then in August of 2006, YourLink signed a seven-year service agreement with Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to supply wireless high speed Internet service to all of its Saskatchewan facilities. Not only does this agreement allow YourLink to provide Internet service to these existing buildings but also to utilize these access points to provide rural residents within the area with wireless high speed Internet options.

YourLink's internet service operates on a 'point to multi-point' system. Subscribers receive a YourLink signal transmitted from the closest access point.

"Because our service operates via towers or high structures, line of site from the subscribers' home to the access point is crucial in order to receive the wireless signal," explains Dan Halden, sales manager.

The general coverage area from an access point extends up to a 25 km radius. Because terrain and vegetation can impact the coverage, any new

access points established by YourLink are strategically placed to ensure the most effective coverage and service for their subscribers.

"Currently our high speed internet service is available in 80 communities and regions around Saskatchewan," says Richardson. "The networking partnerships established with Saskatchewan grain companies, school divisions, and First Nations organizations has enabled us to enhance our service."

With its continued growth, YourLink Inc. continues to search for rural individuals who would like to become authorized dealers. YourLink provides in-depth training and support for all its authorized dealers.

YourLink Inc.'s most recent launch was a new tower erected on the south edge of Blackstrap Lake providing area residents with high-speed wireless Internet service. YourLink will be developing additional tower sites in the Saskatoon regions as part of a larger strategy to enhance its service in the region surrounding Saskatoon.

"Our company is looking at providing service to resort and lake front residents," says Richardson. "YourLink is also introducing wireless routing systems for in-home networks allowing home or small business subscribers to connect multiple computers to their YourLink high speed Internet service. It's another way of providing enhanced quality service to customers."

With over 6,000 subscribers across Saskatchewan, YourLink Inc. is committed to keeping rural Saskatchewan connected with family. This aggressively growing business provides wireless Internet services in Saskatchewan, Western Ontario and Central Alberta as well as cable television services in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. More information can be obtained by calling 1-306-955-3122 or 1-866-650-LINK (5465).

Regional farming practices determine soil conservation solutions

Soil Conservation Council of Canada

Protecting and enhancing soil residue has become possible for farmers because of continuing research and developments in technology. That same research has clearly demonstrated that there isn't one solution that fits all crops in all areas of the country, say specialists at the forefront of soil conservation.

In western Canada, no till, minimum till and direct seeding have meant a tremendous shift from conventional summerfallow and tillage practices. In the east, direct seeding is combined with practices such as zone and strip tillage treatments, grassed waterways, terraced farming and others to maintain soil sustainability.

A feature article released through the national Soil Conservation Council of Canada (SCCC) website, www.soilcc.ca, says farmers across Canada are taking the message that soil and water conservation is crucial to success, and they are translating it into workable solutions for their farms in their part of the country.

Farmers have done a fantastic job in adopting these improved practices, says Glen Hass, a retired Saskatchewan agrologist, extension specialist and former director of the SCCC. We don't see the dust storms on the prairies we would have a few years ago. And while there are major rainfall events and flooding in various parts of the country, we're not seeing the horrendous cases of water erosion.

The SCCC has worked together with provincial associations and governments to help establish taking charge teams, regional committees which brought together national and provincial programs and initiatives and delivered them at the local level. Because of this system, the soil conservation message has reached more producers in a relatively short period of time, says Hass.

While direct seeding has worked well for almost all crops in western Canada, it is not a good fit for potato production in eastern Canada. In regions with intensive livestock operations and larger rural populations, there are further challenges of proper manure and nutrient management.

In Ontario, about 50 percent of high-acreage crops such as wheat and soybeans are now

being produced under no-till cropping systems. But Ontario's other major crop, corn, calls for different solutions.

We need to continue to evaluate practices which can be adapted for specific crops and soils, says Harold Rudy, the executive director of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA). In many cases, no-till doesn't suit corn because without tillage, it would take longer for heavier soils to warm in the spring.

Rudy says that researchers and farmers are evaluating strip tillage as a soil conservation solution. From a crop production standpoint, we found this treatment as effective as conventional tillage and yet 60 to 70 percent of the field remains undisturbed, he says.

Soil conservationists in many jurisdictions use a benchmark figure of 30 percent crop residue cover at time of planting as a goal of soil conservation efforts. In Quebec, reaching that figure has been slow, but they are making steady progress.

Getting the soil conservation message out to producers takes time, says Odette Menard, a soil and water conservation specialist with the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture. A lot of progress has been made, and about four or five percent of Quebec farmland is now being managed under no-till cropping practices.

Menard says that more

farmers in the province are becoming familiar with the terminology and the concepts as they see their neighbours adopting conservation practices. Some are also using a chisel plow or an offset plow to conserve the soil. These practices, which improve soil quality, also have an economic value, she says.

In eastern Canada, the wide variety of crops has meant numerous solutions for soil conservation. The efforts in potato production have been the most dramatic. In New Brunswick, for example, 30 percent of the potato acres are now managed by soil conservation practices to minimize erosion and improve soil quality.

About 30 percent of the potato acres in the province are protected by measures such as diversion terrace systems which is contouring in combination with the use of grass or rock waterways, says Jean-Louis Daigle, executive director of the Eastern Canada Soil and Water Conservation Centre. Under the conservation farming practices in the region, it is estimated that topsoil losses have been reduced by 80 percent.

For the full story and more information on the Soil Conservation Council of Canada, visit the SCCC website at www.soilcc.ca.

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