William Nagtegaal lives in Tavistock. He worked for General Motors for 26 years and retired in 2009. He’s married with 3 children. One child is married, another has moved out and one lives at home. William likes to putter around his garden and work on the house. He jokes that he still can’t see the bottom of the ‘job jar’. “The best part of being retired is the freedom to do whatever you want, when you want.”

William has flower and vegetable gardens, and he plants and harvests his own beans, onions, tomatoes, and potatoes. In the fall, William goes deer hunting with his buddies. You can believe how fast it was. My daughter has broadband in Woodstock too and she does everything on it.”

William likes to get weather reports, research gardening tips, order seeds and just browse the Web. “I just couldn’t do any of this when I was on dial-up. I’d launch my browser and then go and have a pork chop dinner and the page still wouldn’t have loaded,” stated William.

That’s where the “Rural Oxford Connections” program of the County of Oxford came in. As part of “Rural Connections” broadband funding program of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the County and Execulink Telecom (the Internet Service Provider selected through a Request for Proposal by the County of Oxford) teamed-up to bring broadband wireless Internet to the nooks and crannies of the County, and all those rural parts in-between.

RURAL OXFORD CONNECTIONS brings broadband Internet to rural residents and retirees

Above: Execulink’s Hickson wireless tower.
Left: The improvised wireless antennae attached to the weather vane in William’s front yard.
“So, I saw an advertisement for broadband in my March tax bill from Oxford County. I contacted Execulink straight away to come out.” Execulink came out, but because William has a lot of trees on his property, Joel Freund, Wireless Operations Manager for Execulink, thought it best to come back when the trees were in bloom to confirm line of sight with Execulink’s wireless tower. Execulink returned in June to discover they could not achieve line of sight from their tower due to the foliage. But between Joel and William they came up with a creative solution.

“I have railway tie with a weather vane on top of it in my front yard. There is a sign at the base of it that reads ‘Guard dog on duty’. Execulink put the antenna near the top of this post, with the mast sticking up. I buried the cable from the post to the house. The signal strength is good,” said William. “We initially tested our 800 MHz unlicensed system from Hickson tower before the 3.65 GHz licensed service went live just to see if we could get a signal,” said Joel. “We had line of sight to the Hickson tower but had some interference causing high error rates on the link, which means we couldn’t provide William a reliable service.” Once William and Joel came up with the weather vane as a location for the antenna, Execulink went back out to provide service to William’s house and discovered they could get a consistent signal on the licensed system. “The service has been solid ever since,” said William.

“Execulink was good to deal with. They went on my computer in the basement to make sure it worked. I got the service on June 9th,” said William. “Now I use the Internet for Kijji to buy and sell things. I do online banking. And I’m into audio, so I belong to audio forums. If my dog Boomer gets sick we figure how to fix him up online. Marilyn does cross stitching, which is like needlepoint. She makes pictures and designs - she got a pattern for a boxer like Boomer off the Internet. Broadband is like a breath of fresh of air. Now we go anywhere we want, anytime we want on the Web. It’s perfect for retirees,” finishes William.