

Infrastructure needs are group's concern

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Residents concerned about everything from potholes to water quality have a new destination on the information highway.

The Heavy Construction Association of Regional Niagara (HCARN) has put up a Web site to educate the public about Niagara's infrastructure needs. It's an issue HCARN hopes to take on the road this springs as part of a public awareness campaign aimed at showing the region's residents just how dire the situation is becoming.

HCARN commissioned a study in Spring 2001 that concluded 60 per cent of Niagara's roads are substandard to poor. The report also stressed the need to invest \$42.7 million in immediate road repairs.

Rick Phibbs, HCARN president, said there is a growing realization among politicians and citizens that something should be done to ensure a safe and reliable infrastructure is in place.

"The study showed that a good

infrastructure attracts economic opportunities to the community," he said.

Politicians interested in keeping taxes low will pay a much heavier price down the road if infrastructure is neglected, he added.

The new HCARN Web site has been open since January.

Association members are hoping the public will log on and take time to fill out an Infrastructure Survey designed to gauge public opinion on a variety of issues.

About 800 people have visited the Web site in the opening weeks, but Phibbs is optimistic that numbers will improve as people become more aware of it.

HCARN is a lobby group comprising 36 of Niagara's heavy construction firms. Members plan to visit local shopping malls in March and April to continue gathering data for the Infrastructure Survey.

Phibbs said HCARN plans to visit the Fairview Mall in St. Catharines, the Niagara Square in Niagara Falls; and the Seaway Mall in Welland. Times and dates have yet to be finalized.