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Media Release

Eastern Ontario Officials Respond to Provincial Broadband Funding

Elected officials across Eastern Ontario are hopeful that the Government of Ontario's new \$4-billion broadband program will help deliver Gig level speeds across the region.

The Province announced that the program, [Ontario Connects](#), will connect every home, community and area to high-speed internet by the end of 2025. The program will provide funding directly to Internet Service Providers, who will be selected to serve different geographic areas through a series of reverse-bid auction events.

The substantial investment is applauded by the Eastern Ontario Regional Network, along with the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus.

EORN, which has been leading improved connectivity across the rural region for more than a decade, has proposed a regional project to deliver broadband speeds of one gigabit (1G) across the region. This project would deliver ultra-fast internet to at least 95 per cent of the region, including some areas that have little service today. The organization offers its support to ensure that its residents get access to Gig-level speeds wherever possible. It is also encouraging the federal government to continue investing eastern Ontario.

EORN is currently delivering on a \$300 million Cell Gap Project to improve cell service coverage and capacity. The project is jointly funded by federal and provincial governments, and Rogers Communications.

"We appreciate that the federal and provincial governments heard EORN, the EOWC and the EOMC about the urgent need for broadband expansion in our region. Public investment is critical to expanding broadband in rural areas," said Debbie Robinson, Chair of the EOWC.

"We congratulate the Minister and the provincial government on this historic \$4 billion investment. EORN is prepared to lend our expertise to deliver our Gig Project in support of the Government's commitment to connect 100% of eastern Ontarians. Our work has demonstrated that collaborative, publicly funded broadband projects can deliver results," said J. Murray Jones, Chair of EORN.

"EORN's analysis demonstrated the economic value of connecting our communities to future-proof, Gig-speed internet and we are hopeful that Ontario Connects and federal funding

programs will ultimately help deliver this level of service to our communities,” said Diane Therrien, Chair of the EOMC.

About EORN

EORN, a non-profit created by the Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus (EOWC), works with governments and community organizations to improve and leverage broadband access to fuel economic development and growth.

EORN is currently working on a \$300 million project, funded by public and private sector partners, to improve and expand cellular services across the region. Building on that project is beginning in 2021.

From 2010 to 2014, EORN helped to improve broadband access to nearly 90 per cent of eastern Ontario through a \$175 million public-private partnership. The network was funded by federal, provincial and municipal governments and private sector service providers. As a result of the project, 423,000 homes and businesses are now able to access services of up to 10 Mbps download. It also spurred more than \$100 million in additional private sector investment in the region, over and above their initial commitments.

About the EOWC

Since its inception, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) has worked to support and advocate on behalf of the 750,000 property taxpayers across rural eastern Ontario. The EOWC covers an area of 45,000 square kilometres from Cobourg to the Quebec border, and includes 13 upper-tier and single-tier municipalities as well as 90 local municipalities. All members work together as a team, striving to ensure that conditions are in place to make Eastern Ontario the greatest place in the world to reside and do business.

About the EOMC

The Eastern Ontario Mayors’ Caucus (EOMC) is made up of the mayors of the 11 urban municipalities (separated, single tier) of Eastern Ontario. The committee meets quarterly as a group with the municipal CAOs in attendance to discuss common issues relevant to municipalities in eastern Ontario.

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Learn more about the provincial program: <https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/Ontario-Connects/>

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