



May 4, 2021

## Media Release

### **Mayors, Reeves, Wardens Call on Federal and Provincial Governments to support the EORN Gig Project to bring Fibre to the Home**

On Tuesday, 59 heads of Council from across eastern Ontario gathered for a virtual meeting and voiced overwhelming support for the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) Gig Project, which aims to connect homes and businesses across the region with ultra-fast internet speeds.

These municipal leaders are joining the Chairs of EORN, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) and the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus (EOMC) in urging the federal and provincial governments to fund the region-wide Gig Project. The project would expand fibre to homes and businesses to deliver internet speeds up to 1 Gig (1,000 Megabits per second).

EORN has been seeking federal and provincial support for the public-private partnership valued at up to \$1.6 billion. It would include investments by the federal and provincial governments, and the private sector, through EORN's proven model for expanding connectivity in underserved regions.

EORN is requesting \$200 million each from the federal and provincial governments. This is about six per cent of the total funds the governments of Canada and Ontario have committed to broadband expansion. Given that recent analysis shows rural eastern Ontario accounts for about 30% of all under-served households in Ontario, the project offers tremendous value.

The EORN Gig Project offers a comprehensive solution that ensures the region can keep pace with rising demand for connectivity over the long-term. It is critical for the region's economic recovery from the pandemic and will support future economic growth and improved quality of life.

#### Quotes:

"The assembled heads of Council were loud and clear in saying they will urge both the federal and provincial governments to commit to funding this essential broadband project. This is what the people we represent need and deserve. The EORN model, which pools resources and

planning at a regional scale, is proven to be efficient and effective. It is straightforward for the telecommunications industry and preferred by local governments, which have limited capacity to manage such projects on their own.”

- *Debbie Robinson, Chair of the EOWC and Warden of Renfrew County*

“This level of support is truly remarkable. It was so encouraging to have 59 mayors, reeves and wardens join our virtual meeting on short notice. To then hear their keen interest in supporting the EORN Gig project really speaks to their desire to do something truly game-changing for our citizens and businesses. We got a huge vote of confidence from them and for that we are extremely grateful.”

- *J. Murray Jones, Chair of EORN and Warden of Peterborough County*

“Like my colleagues at the EOWC, the mayors of eastern Ontario’s cities and towns including my city, Peterborough, along with Quinte West, Belleville and Prescott, to name just a few, see the incredible economic and social benefits the Gig Project would bring to our communities. Creating jobs, helping our children learn online, and improving access to healthcare services are benefits that as mayors, we endorse wholeheartedly.”

- *Diane Therrien, Chair of EOMC and Mayor of the City of Peterborough*

## **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 \$213 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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