

June 22, 2020

The Honourable Navdeep Bains
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
Navdeep.Bains@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Catherine McKenna Minister of Infrastructure and Communities Catherine.McKenna@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Maryam Monsef Minister of Rural Economic Development Minister for Women and Gender Equality Maryam.Monsef@parl.qc.ca

Dear Ministers,

Re: Urgent and immediate funding request to support the expansion of broadband infrastructure in Southwestern Ontario

As the Warden for the County of Essex, I am writing you today to seek urgent and immediate funding to support the expansion of critical broadband infrastructure across Southwestern Ontario, including in underserved areas of Essex County.

Efforts at the local, federal and provincial level have been underway to provide all Ontarians, no matter where they live, with access to high-speed internet. This is not an overnight process; however, the COVID-19 outbreak has laid bare the challenges our underserved communities in Essex County and across Southwestern Ontario are facing.

In today's unprecedented times, where children are required to attend school remotely, online ordering is the new norm and virtual meetings are now a workplace requirement, broadband is not a luxury, it is essential.

Connectivity is key to the social and economic success of our communities – we need to invest in the future of our communities. Increased funding is urgently needed to boost the pace and scale of broadband deployment efforts to address gaps in service and provide digital equality for all in Canada.







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It has been estimated that it would cost approximately \$2.5 billion to provide a fibre-based solution to address all Southwestern Ontario's underserved areas – wireless could help to reduce these costs in some areas. Adequate funding is required to ensure that broadband, an essential utility, is accessible for all.

The message to you is clear. **Southwestern Ontario broadband funding cannot be undervalued**. The region represents 10% of the Canadian population and 25% of the population of Ontario. Adequate and equitable funding for all underserved municipalities within the region is required to ensure that broadband, an essential utility, is accessible for all.

On behalf of the County of Essex, we are urging the federal government to solve a fundamental issue and provide a basic need to all our residents currently living without access to reliable high-speed internet. The longer our communities are left without, the greater the people and businesses of Southwestern Ontario and Essex County will suffer from social and economic inequalities.

We are asking the Canadian government to take immediate action and make a substantial investment in high-speed connectivity.

Sincerely,

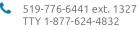
Gary McNamara Warden, County of Essex Mayor, Town of Tecumseh

CC.

The Honourable Laurie Scott Minister of Infrastructure, Ontario laurie.scott@pc.ola.org

Chris Lewis
Member of Parliament, Essex
Chris.Lewis@parl.gc.ca

Dave Epp MP Chatham-Kent Leamington Dave.epp@parl.gc.ca





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Town of Amherstburg

Aldo DiCarlo, Mayor, <u>aDicarlo@amherstburg.ca</u> John Miceli, CAO, <u>jmiceli@amherstburg.ca</u>

Town of Essex

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