



Monday, June 8, 2020

The Honourable Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
minister.mah@ontario.ca

Appreciation for Support of Rural Access to Broadband

Dear Minister Clark,

On behalf of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus and our 15 upper and single-tier municipalities that represent over 300 communities and approximately three million residents, thank you for your letter dated June 4, 2020.

Your commitment to enhance broadband access in Ontario through the Broadband and Cellular Action Plan is appreciated. The \$315 million over five years to expand broadband and cellular infrastructure, will serve to support many of our rural and underserved residents in Southwestern Ontario.

Additional funding for rural broadband in the wake of COVID-19 is essential. As a critical component of the economic relief and stimulus measures, important investments must be made to boost the pace and scale of broadband deployment efforts.

Increased funding from both the Province of Ontario and the Government of Canada is urgently needed to address our region's large connectivity gaps, so that we can close the digital divide and restart our economies. The Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus supports the funding of existing shovel ready, municipally led models that will connect our rural economies at an accelerated pace. We support SWIFT as Southwestern Ontario's funding mechanism to advance the expansion of critical broadband infrastructure across the region. The model works, it delivers results and can be immediately leveraged to upgrade networks and coverage in our region's underserved areas.

Families and business in our rural areas have been shut out of the economy and society as a result of the pandemic. COVID -19 has underscored the need in urgency to address gaps in broadband services across our region.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Ginn', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jim Ginn
Chair, Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus

cc. The Honourable Navdeep Bains
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
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The Honourable Catherine McKenna
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Members of Parliament, Western Ontario
Members of Provincial Parliament, Western Ontario
Member Counties of Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus
Heads of Municipal Council (Western Ontario)