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May 29, 2017

Proposal tackles cellular dead zones across Eastern Ontario
Mobile broadband critical to regional growth

The Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) is seeking federal and provincial support to fill gaps in cellular coverage that are standing in the way of the region's economic growth and public safety. The proposal was formally submitted today to Ontario Infrastructure Minister Bob Chiarelli and Rural Affairs Minister Jeff Leal at a meeting in Toronto.

EORN is proposing a \$213 million public-private partnership to improve both the reach and quality of cellular data services in the region. According to an engineering study commissioned by EORN:

- About one quarter of the area where there are homes, businesses or major roads in the region cannot access any cellular services.
- Depending on the cell carrier, another 28% to 40% of the area has inadequate capacity to provide high quality mobile broadband service given the demand, which continues to grow.

The gaps are the result of market failure. Rural areas don't generate enough revenue for cell carriers to build adequate services. The CRTC recently designated both mobile and fixed broadband as basic services for all Canadians. A public-private partnership would reduce carriers' infrastructure costs, creating a stronger business case to improve services and meet the CRTC's basic services goals.

EORN has submitted a detailed business case for cell expansion to the federal and provincial governments. The proposal also includes a dedicated, public safety broadband network to seamlessly connect first responders region-wide. Building both networks together would cost about \$299 million, saving about \$47 million compared to building them separately.

About EORN

EORN, a non-profit created by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC), helped to improve broadband access to nearly 90% of Eastern Ontario through a \$175 million fixed broadband network funded by the federal, provincial and municipal governments and private sector service providers. It works with governments and community organizations to improve and leverage broadband access to fuel economic development and growth across the region.

The EOWC directed EORN to prepare and submit a project proposal to improve access to mobile broadband services and support the creation of a public safety broadband network.

Quotes

"Too often, Eastern Ontarians find themselves with no signal or dropped cell services. EORN is building on the investment we've already made in fibre optics across the region to close the gap in cell services and improve economic growth, quality of life and public safety."

- *EORN Chair J. Murray Jones*

"The demand for mobile data is growing exponentially, but our region is deeply lacking the needed infrastructure to keep up. This project is our top priority because Eastern Ontario's future is at stake."

- *EOWC Chair Robert Quaiff*

-30-

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