



April 20, 2020

EORN issues Request for Proposal to tackle cellular dead zones across eastern Ontario
Mobile broadband critical to regional growth

Eastern Ontario is one step closer to improved cellular services that will help rural communities take part in the digital economy, create jobs and improve public safety.

Today, the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) issued the first [Request for Proposal](#) to build new cellular infrastructure. The competitive bidding process will identify telecommunication partners who offer both the expertise and best value for expanded cell coverage in areas where people live, work and travel.

The federal and provincial governments have committed \$71 million each to the \$213 million public-private partnership to improve both the reach and quality of mobile broadband services in the region. All members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and most municipalities within the Eastern Ontario Mayors' Caucus are contributing to the \$10 million municipal share. Mobile carriers are expected to provide the balance of the funding.

There are currently significant gaps in both the reach and capacity of mobile broadband networks across areas of rural Eastern Ontario where people live, work or travel:

- 40 per cent of the area does not have access to high-definition services that allow streaming HD video.
- 20 per cent of the area does not have access to standard definition video, typical mobile app use and video app calling.
- 10 per cent has no voice calling service.

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

The EORN initiative applies to a geographic area that includes 13 members of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (11 regional county municipalities and two single-tier municipalities), and nine separated municipalities.

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus includes:

- County of Frontenac
- County of Haliburton
- County of Hastings
- City of Kawartha Lakes (single tier)
- County of Lanark

(more)

- United Counties of Leeds and Grenville
- County of Lennox and Addington
- County of Northumberland
- County of Peterborough
- United Counties of Prescott and Russell
- County of Prince Edward (single tier)
- County of Renfrew
- United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

The nine separated municipalities include:

- Kingston
- Belleville
- Quinte West
- Smiths Falls
- Gananoque
- Prescott
- City of Peterborough
- Pembroke
- Cornwall

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 public private partnership. The fixed broadband network was funded by the federal, provincial and municipal governments and private sector service providers. EORN 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. More information is available at www.eorn.ca.

Quotes

“At this critical time it’s important that all Canadians can stay connected through reliable cell service and high-speed internet. This important project will bring mobile service to more than 100 communities and over 1 million people across Eastern Ontario and ensure that residents and businesses have better access to online services and tools. Since 2015, our government has helped connect over 900 communities across Canada and we will continue to build on that progress through our \$1 billion Universal Broadband Fund.”

- *The Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development*

(more)

“Now more than ever, our government understands that families and businesses in Ontario need to be connected to prosper in this 21st century digital economy. This project will take a number of years to complete, but that’s why we’re working with our federal and municipal partners today, to solicit proposals from service providers to improve cellular connectivity for those families and businesses in the future.”

- *The Honourable Laurie Scott, Ontario’s Minister of Infrastructure*

“EORN has been planning this work for several years and we are pleased to finally launch the bidding process – an important first step in building the project. We are looking to build on the investment we’ve already made in broadband infrastructure with partners who will deliver value and quality in closing the gap in mobile services.”

- *EORN Chair J. Murray Jones*

“The demand for mobile broadband is growing exponentially, but our region is deeply lacking the needed infrastructure to keep up. Improved cell service has been the EOWC’s top priority and it is gratifying to see this RFP issued. Ultimately, we want to improve economic growth, quality of life and public safety for our communities.”

- *EOWC Chair Andy Letham*

“Members of the Mayors’ Caucus understand that for our region to keep pace with technology, we need to ensure we have not only minimum cell coverage, but enough capacity to meet the rapid growth in demand for mobile broadband. Our communities’ success will depend on being able to engage in the digital economy.”

- *EOMC Chair Bryan Paterson*

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