

For Immediate Release

Eastern Ontario Regional Network Maps Eastern Ontario's Digital Future
Long-term Digital Strategy Shared at 2015 OGRA/ROMA Combined Conference

TORONTO, ON (February 24, 2014) – The Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) today released its long-term Digital Strategy, which provides a road map for Eastern Ontario to become a leader in using rural broadband access to help create strong, sustainable communities.

The strategy was presented by EORN at a meeting of provincial ministers during the 2015 OGRA/ROMA Combined Conference in Toronto. The annual conference is hosted jointly by the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA).

EORN was first created by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) to build a \$170-million rural broadband network, which was completed last fall with the support of the federal, provincial and municipal governments and the investment of private sector partners.

The network, which is scalable to meet growing needs, serves more than one million people across 50,000 square kilometres of rural Eastern Ontario.

"The Digital Strategy aims to build on our success, by making sure that the network keeps pace with changing demands," said EORN Chair David Burton. "Through continued advocacy and partnership, EORN will support communities in using the network to its fullest potential."

EORN's Digital Strategy focuses on expanding access and empowering residents, businesses and organizations to use high-speed internet services. Current priorities include:

- Using EORN's 5,500-kilometre fibre optic backbone to improve mobile broadband access and cell service;
- Leveraging the network for regional economic development activities;
- Increasing the number of residents and businesses who take advantage of the network; and,
- Using the network to improve municipal and other public services.

"We are pleased that more than 99 per cent of residents and businesses can access high-speed internet as a result of the project. It is an important first step," said EOWC Chair Eric Duncan. "High-speed internet access is a critical tool for our regional economic development strategy, which aims to create thriving communities across Eastern Ontario."

The full strategy is available at www.eorn.ca under "Resources."

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Backgrounder: Eastern Ontario Regional Network

The Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN), a \$170-million broadband project spearheaded by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC), was completed in fall 2014 and is delivering improved economic opportunity and quality of life to rural communities across Eastern Ontario.

It is Ontario's largest rural broadband network, serving a region of more than one million people spread out over 50,000 square kilometres. The federal and provincial governments each contributed up to \$55 million. EOWC Inc. contributed \$10 million, with municipalities and private sector partners providing the remaining funding.

The project included the following:

- **Fibre Optic Backbone:** A scalable 5,500-km network of new and existing fibre optic cable connected by 160 Points of Presence throughout Eastern Ontario.
- **Local Access Networks:** Nearly two dozen local access networks that connect businesses and residents to the backbone through either wired or fixed wireless technology.
- **Improved Satellite:** More affordable satellite packages through Xplornet Communications to reach those parts of the region with extreme population scarcity and/or difficult terrain.
- **Fibre-enabled Business Parks/Areas:** High-speed, high-capacity fibre optic internet connections at more than 60 business parks and core business areas across the region.

As a result of EORN, 99 per cent of homes and businesses in Eastern Ontario can access high-speed internet. Nearly 90 per cent of homes and businesses – about 415,000 – can access high-speed internet of at least 10 Mbps through either wired (DSL) or fixed wireless services, with the remaining able to access these same speeds via improved satellite services. EORN also worked in collaboration with First Nations communities in Eastern Ontario to improve broadband access in their communities.

EORN and the EOWC serve communities across rural Eastern Ontario, including the counties of Hastings, Peterborough, Renfrew, Northumberland, Haliburton, Frontenac, Lanark, Prince Edward, Lennox & Addington, the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry, the United Counties of Prescott & Russell, the United Counties of Leeds & Grenville, as well as the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Digital Strategy

Now that the network has been built, EORN has developed a long-term Digital Strategy. Through continued advocacy and partnership, EORN hopes to create one of the world's most digitally connected rural regions, where residents, businesses, and public services fully embrace and harness the potential of high-speed broadband.

Current priorities include:

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- Leveraging the network for regional economic development activities;
- Increasing the number of residents and businesses who take advantage of the network; and,
- Using the network to improve municipal and other public services.